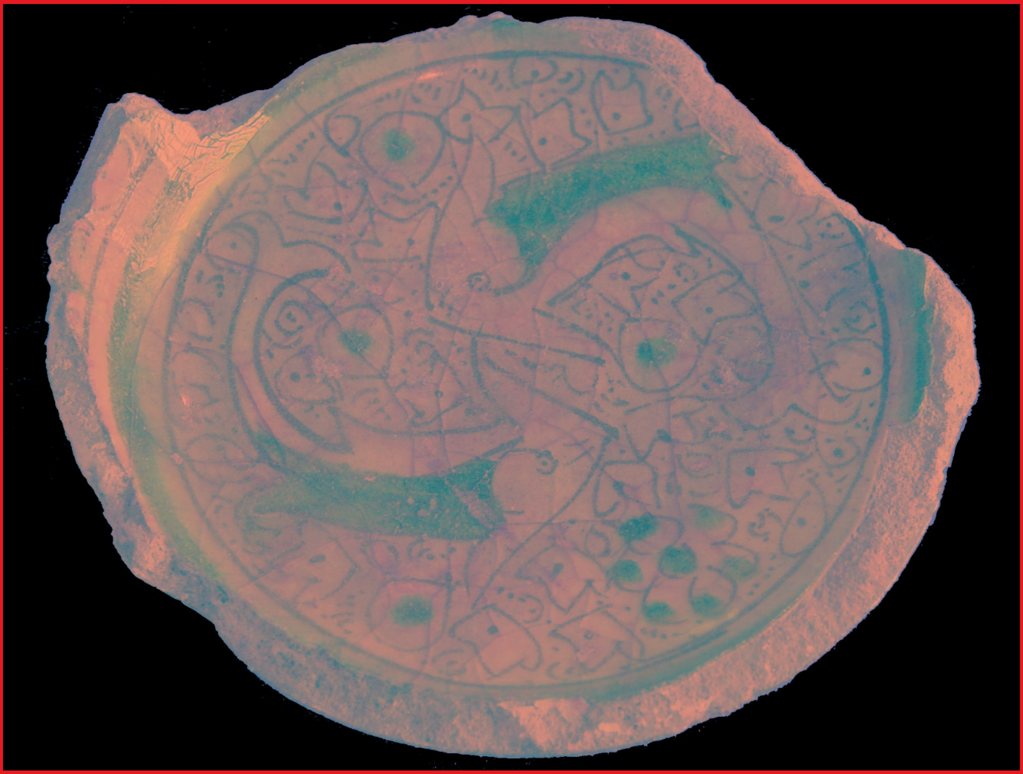
Islamic Art, Architecture and Material Culture

New perspectives

Edited by

Margaret S. Graves



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Islamic Art, Architecture and Material Culture

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This collection of papers sprang from a workshop that was hosted in 2007 by the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW) at the University of Edinburgh, and the original event was made possible by the very generous support of CASAW. The staff of CASAW and the Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies department at Edinburgh are also to be thanked for their assistance with the workshop, in particular Rhona Hajcman, Katy Kalemkerian and Sophie Lowry. I am also extremely grateful to Professors Robert and Carole Hillenbrand, who chaired sessions at the workshop and provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the event and in the subsequent preparation of this publication. The greatest thanks are due to the authors of the articles, some of whom have considerably expanded their original papers for this publication. In the time that has elapsed between presentation and publication many of the authors involved have completed their Ph.D. studies and have embarked upon new research projects and new positions, testifying to the vigour of Islamic art and architectural studies in the United Kingdom that this project was originally intended to showcase.

Throughout the volume transliteration from Arabic has followed a modified version of the conventions used in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.), and diacritical symbols have not been used, with the exception of the symbols ‘ for ‘ayn and ’ for hamza. Exceptions to transliteration are proper names that have a widely recognised Romanised form, such as Saladin or Marjeh Square.

INTRODUCTION

Robert Hillenbrand

This book is the published record of the proceedings of one of the first conferences held under the auspices of the newly established Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World. The Centre, set up in 2006 with a £5 million grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council, comprises a consortium of the universities of Edinburgh, Manchester and Durham whose brief is to secure long-term improvements in the teaching of the Arabic language and of Middle Eastern studies in the United Kingdom. The conference, held in Edinburgh in August 2007 under the title *Arab Art, Architecture and Material Culture*, was organised by Margaret Graves, then a Ph.D. student of Islamic art history at the University of Edinburgh. The intention was to use the conference as a way of encouraging younger scholars of Islamic art history to present their ideas before an audience of their peers, and to highlight the variety of research currently being undertaken into Islamic art, principally in British universities – though a few speakers from abroad also contributed. Twelve of the participants provided final versions of the papers that they had delivered at the conference, and these have been expertly edited by Dr Margaret Graves in the present volume.

These twelve papers fall quite naturally into categories defined by medium. Half of them deal with the so-called 'minor', 'decorative' or 'applied' arts – the uncertain nomenclature betrays a long outdated but still persistent Eurocentric taxonomy from which Islamic art historians have still not entirely freed themselves, and which embodies a hierarchical distinction between architecture, painting and sculpture (a notional First Division), and all other arts and crafts (a notional Second Division). This distinction simply does not work in the field of Islamic art, where such media as metalwork, textiles and ceramics effortlessly claim major status. These media are the subject matter of the first six papers in this collection, and it is entirely appropriate that they are so well represented here. The second half of the book comprises three papers on the built environment and three on the arts of the book.

This collection of papers, then, can fairly claim to offer a representative survey of most of the major categories of Islamic art. Moreover, the chronological range of the papers is as wide as it well could be, stretching as it does from the very beginnings of Islamic art, in the form of the earliest Qur'anic scripts, to the work of a contemporary Iraqi artist. Even more, it presents an impressive variety of approaches to this material. Some papers offer revisionary suggestions on questions of provenance; others zero in on neglected angles onto otherwise familiar material; yet others bring in external material to shed light on otherwise insoluble problems, or engage with knotty issues of iconography and symbolism, or present brand-new material. Thus there is something for everybody here, as the following brief survey of the contents of this volume testifies.

The short paper by Teresa Fitzherbert, a taster for a longer article currently in preparation, takes a justly celebrated, indeed iconic example of thirteenth-century inlaid metalwork, the Freer canteen, and tentatively suggests that its strikingly multi-confessional character might point to its place of production as the Mosul area. Much of the published work on this masterpiece has sought to disentangle its Christian from its Muslim elements, and to explain their co-existence. But conventional wisdom has long attributed it to the Levant, so her suggestion of a Jaziran provenance, with a possible connection with the convent of Mar Behnam, opens new horizons. Maria Sardi offers a meaty discussion of the role of textiles in Mamluk society which includes their use in costume, furnishings, ceremonial, sartorial distinctions, insignia, diplomatic gifts and religious symbols. Noting that the most expensive Mamluk textiles have been lost, she then examines surviving textiles made for utilitarian domestic use. These are principally in linen, cotton and wool. She draws her examples from unfamiliar material in the Benaki Museum, presenting a selection from the more than 200 pieces, mostly unpublished, held in that collection, which she studied in the course of writing her doctoral thesis. Miriam Ali-de-Unzaga tackles the issue of craft production head-on with her survey of traditional Moroccan rural textiles. Some of this material is of course utilitarian, but she highlights the multiple ceremonial occasions when prestige textiles play a key role. She explodes some of the myths about such textiles spread by dealers and collectors alike, and has perceptive comments of her own to make on the relative importance of symmetry and asymmetry, on the perceived connection between virtuosity and virtue, on the extra dimension of enchantment that accompanies some very complex designs, on the fallaciousness of imposing a Western mindset on the interpretation of the motifs used, and on the implications of the fact that the weavers are all women and that their skills are taught non-verbally, in virtual secrecy. Above all, the social context of these textiles is fully realised. There is much to ponder here and the illustrations present a mass of new material.

The next three papers are devoted to ceramics. Rosalind Wade Haddon marshals a formidable degree of technical expertise – garnered over years of strenuous fieldwork – to solve the problem of how to distinguish Mamluk from Mongol fine wares produced in the fourteenth century. For her, the diagnostic clues lie in shape and decoration rather than in the composition of the body of such wares. She has trawled a very wide range of out-of-the-way material, as her references to examples in remotely located local museums testify, and she enriches her analysis by bringing little-known material from the Golden Horde into her purview. Similarly, she provides hard evidence for a wider range of production centres than is acknowledged in the standard accounts of later medieval Muslim ceramics. Her conclusions are hard-won and they carry corresponding conviction. In a neatly constructed paper, Anna McSweeney reveals the international dimensions of thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Paterna tableware decorated on the inside with brown and green glaze using Cornish tin. She notes that such wares already had a long history in al-Andalus, North Africa, France and Sicily, and shows how these wares, made by Mudéjar craftsmen and marketed by Christian merchants, were traded all over the western Mediterranean and beyond, and how their hybrid style appealed to Christian and Muslim patrons alike. So here is a textbook case of *convivencia* in the economic sphere. The paper by Margaret Graves presents a body of material, some of it unfamiliar, which in her hands springs various surprises. This paper is a quantum leap forward in a neglected sub-set of the scholarship on Muslim ceramics. She confronts a key issue of perception, namely what lay behind the use of architectural motifs on a much-reduced scale for small glazed ceramic tables or tabourets which themselves mimic something much less fragile (usually made of wood), that served an everyday purpose. So these ceramic tabourets operate at two removes from their original sources of inspiration, and this brings both toys and (more subtly) humour to mind, quite apart from illustrating the habit, particularly well-attested among medieval Muslim craftsmen, of borrowing from another medium and, by making such unexpected shifts, transforming the nature and visual impact of a given object. The author manages, in the course of a provocative and sophisticated analysis, to shed new light on how the minds of some medieval craftsmen worked. In the process she discusses issues of provenance (Syria or Iran), function (vessel supports? hot plates? the display of precious objects?), parallels in wood and ivory (from as far afield as Afghanistan and Mamluk Egypt), and possible sources of inspiration (such as garden furniture). She concludes with a penetrating and lively analysis of these tabourets as an example of medieval kitsch, though she explicitly rejects the negative connotations of that word in this context.

There follows a trio of papers that deal with architecture and the built environment. Melanie Gibson's paper serves as a useful bridge between this section and the previous one, for it presents a group of twelfth- to thirteenth-century stucco statues for which she suggests an architectural setting. Some of them are nearly life-size, while others are much smaller. In earlier scholarship they were treated as isolated images for which no convincing context was proposed. Melanie Gibson persuasively associates them with a familiar iconographic schema: the *khassakiyya* or personal attendants and bodyguards of the ruler, surrounding him as he sits enthroned. Drawing on, but expanding, Estelle Whelan's treatment of this theme, Gibson provides a full literary context for this dramatic display of royal magnificence, and suggests that these images, following a tradition that stretched back to Achaemenid times, were so arranged as to frame the seated ruler, with their living counterparts stationed in front of them. In the absence of the attendants and bodyguards themselves, these statues would project a permanent physical reminder of royal power, for all the world like the hanging crowns at Ctesiphon, Khirbat al-Mafjar and Ghazna. Saeid Khaghani ranges widely in his brief but bold paper on Iranian gardens and domestic architecture, evoking Sasanian viziers, Zurvanism, Mazdaean cosmogony, Isma'ili beliefs, Iranian domestic architecture, Hindu and Buddhist *mandala*s, Sufi music, Heidegger, the poetry of Khaqani, and Immanuel Kant. It follows from this heterogeneous selection of references that this paper is essentially a series of *aperçus*, for which there was simply not enough room to provide supporting evidence or a fully contextualised discussion. But there is plenty of food for thought here. At the core of the paper is the notion that time, viewed as a recurring cycle, and divided into seasons, left a profound impact on Iranian art and architecture. Rema Haddad presents a hard-hitting critique, based on extensive fieldwork carried out in 2006, 2007 and 2009, of the partial and inadequate modernisation of the Old City of Damascus in response to a series of ill-considered master plans, especially those devised between 1930 and 1970. She gives chapter and verse for their catastrophic impact on the people who live in the Old City. She shows in vivid detail how changes made to facilitate motor traffic and parking have resulted in the degradation and, in many cases, the disappearance of public spaces. Similarly, the expansion of commercial architecture, notably hotels and large stores, the emphasis on straight streets and blocks of buildings, are developments that have not only been at the expense of private housing but have also flooded the city with strangers and greatly increased pollution. These analyses are contextualised by summaries of how the city looked at various stages of its evolution: before Islam; from the seventh to the eighteenth century; then to independence in 1946; and finally, up to the present day. This well-structured and reflective paper makes salutary reading for anyone interested in the preservation of the built heritage in the Middle East.

The volume closes with three studies devoted to the art of the book. Marcus Fraser's paper attempts to impose clarity and common sense on a complex, very contentious and often confusing field, namely the provenance and dating of the earliest surviving leaves of the Qur'anic text and the evolution of their script. He lays out the limitations of these data, the practical difficulties of comparing material taken from very different media, the pitfalls to be encountered and the range of variation to be expected. All this is set forth in plain expository prose, and so the paper offers a brief, sensible and very useful introduction to the earliest Qur'anic scripts. The rest of this piece follows the model of an earlier and still unpublished paper by the same author, in that it traces the evolution of two specific types of letter in the Arabic alphabet (*dal/dhal* and *jim/kha/ha*), the first in a sixty-year period from 22-82 H/642-705 CE, and the second for a five-year period from 77-82 H/696-701 CE. Both groups are drawn from multiple media and set against much later variants by way of a control. The consistent use of dated inscriptions on stone or in mosaic, of papyri and of coins, to supplement the undated but clearly related evidence of the Qur'anic leaves themselves enables the author to contextualise the manuscripts in much more detail than most earlier scholars have done, and his illustrative tables are particularly valuable in this respect. Filiz Toprak presents a body of well-known material – the thirteenth-century illustrated *Maqamat* manuscripts – in order to argue the possibility that certain scenes were based on oral narratives. She investigates this promising topic by analysing illustrations of the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth *maqama*s in the St Petersburg manuscript, and quotes suggestions that the *Maqamat* may have been written for theatrical performance. She also makes a series of general comments on the cultural background of the *Maqamat* illustrations, mentioning the Shi'i passion narrative (references to which can be found in late Saljuq pottery), shadow plays and the notion of *adab.* She also discusses the visual conventions that operated in other thirteenth- to fourteenth-century manuscripts. Finally, Sarah Sandow gives a conspectus of the work of the expatriate Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudy, concentrating on the autobiographical undertones of his illustrations to carefully selected episodes from the story of Sindbad the Sailor in the *Thousand and One Nights.* She examines two images which well illustrate his range; they depict a *rukh* carrying off a snake, and a vision of the city of Baghdad. This analysis reveals how some modern artists have transformed the traditional medium of calligraphy, finding unexpected ways for the letters of the Arabic alphabet to express personal emotion and to devise powerfully symbolic compositions.

All in all, then, these varied studies show that Islamic art history in its multiple manifestations is thriving in Britain as it is elsewhere, and that the opportunities for original research remain limitless.

Robert Hillenbrand
University of Edinburgh
May 2012

THE FREER CANTEEN: JERUSALEM OR JAZIRA?

Teresa Fitzherbert

The Freer Canteen (figs 1 and 2) is not only one of the most famous objects in Islamic art, but also one of the most enigmatic. It was first brought to the notice of the scholarly public in Michelangelo Lanci's publication of 1845, while still in the collection of Prince Filippo Andrea Doria,[1] from whence it passed to the Eumorfopoulos Collection prior to acquisition by Hagop Kevorkian, and was sold by him to the Freer Gallery of Art in 1941. Since that date, it has continued to attract discussion, particularly regarding the iconography of its decoration.

Although the Canteen is neither signed nor dated, it relates to a group of some eighteen pieces of inlaid metalwork with Christian images, initially ascribed either to Mesopotamia or Syria in the middle decades of the thirteenth century. However, following its inclusion in Eva Baer's 1989 monograph entitled *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images*,[2] the Canteen has been discussed in print only in the context of western Syria – and more specifically Jerusalem – in the period of the Crusades, to the exclusion of a Jaziran option. This paper reopens that discussion by proposing that a Jaziran origin is at least as likely for the Freer Canteen.

In his 1957 article entitled 'The Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili', D.S. Rice identified a Mosul-based workshop specialising in inlaid metalwork.[3] Rice cited two key contemporary historical references, noting that both apply to Mosul during the reign of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', *atabeg* (guardian) to the last three Zangid princes and independent ruler with caliphal agreement from 1233 CE until his death in 1259 in the early years of Ilkhanid rule. The first reference comes from the chronicle of Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, who records that valuable inlaid metalwork was looted by the Khwarazmians from the treasury of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' in 1237; the second is from the *Geography* of the Spanish Muslim, Ibn Sa'id, who travelled to Syria, Mesopotamia and Iraq in 1250 and noted: 'Mosul … there are many crafts in the city, especially inlaid brass vessels which are exported (and presented) to rulers as are the silken garments woven there'.[4] However, as Rice pointed out, the British Museum's Blacas ewer, dated 629 H/1232 CE, is the only vessel currently known that specifically states it was made in Mosul, and from at least the mid-thirteenth century onwards, craftsmen with Mawsili *nisba*s are known to have been working in Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria and Egypt. Rice warns against too narrow a definition of Mosul as the only source of metalworking in Mesopotamia at this period, but does not dismiss either the city or the area as possible places of origin for these objects.[5]

Eva Baer, on the other hand, focused on Rice's diaspora of Mawsili craftsmen, omitting any reference to Ibn Sa'id's report of a Mosul export trade to rulers. Rather, emphasis was given to the fact that two of the objects with Christian images include the name and titles of the Ayyubid Sultan al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub (r. Diyar Bakr 1232–1239, Damascus 1239 and 1245–1249, Egypt 1240–1249).[6] It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the next two publications on the Canteen, Nuha Khoury's 'Narratives of the Holy Land: Memory, Identity and Inverted Imagery in the Freer Basin and Canteen',[7] and Eva Hoffman's 'Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity, and Memory',[8] were both based on the assumption that the Canteen was designed for an Ayyubid and/or Crusader context. An association with the holy city of Jerusalem is indeed encouraged by scenes on the front of the Canteen showing Christ's Nativity (fig. 3), the Presentation in the Temple and the Entry into Jerusalem on Good Friday; and on the rear, the Crusades are suggested by a frieze depicting cavalry, including five horses with Crusader-style horse armour, four with eastern-style saddle blankets and three of the riders appearing to fire western-style crossbows. One of the oriental horsemen is shown attempting a Parthian shot with a crossbow; but since crossbows fired from horseback were usually aimed straight ahead, artistic licence rather than historical accuracy should also be considered.[9]

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[1] Michelangelo Lanci, *Trattato delle Simboliche Rappresentanze Arabiche* (Paris: Parigi, 1845), vol. 2, pp. 141–145, and vol. 3, pls 45–46, nos A, B and 1, 2.

[2] Eva Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[3] David Storm Rice, 'The Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili', *Ars Orientalis*, 2 (1957), pp. 283–326.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 284.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 283–286, 322–326.

[6] Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork*, pp. 4, 10, 22, 35, 41–43 and 49.

[7] Nuha N.N. Khoury, 'Narratives of the Holy Land: Memory, Identity and Inverted Imagery in the Freer Basin and Canteen', *Orientations*, 29/5 (1998), pp. 63–69.

[8] Eva Hoffman, 'Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity, and Memory', *Gesta*, 43/2 (2004), pp. 129–142. For additional bibliography on the Canteen see the works cited.

[9] See particularly Laura T. Schneider, 'The Freer Canteen', *Ars Orientalis*, 9 (1973), pp. 143–145, and pl. 1, fig. 2. It is worth noting that a horse with full body armour also appears on the tray bearing the name and titles of Badr al-Din Lu'lu' now in the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, inv. no. 26-N-118: see Friedrich Sarre and Fredrik Robert Martin, *Die Ausstellung von Meisterwerken Muhammedanischer Kunst in München 1910* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1912), vol. 2, pl. 145.

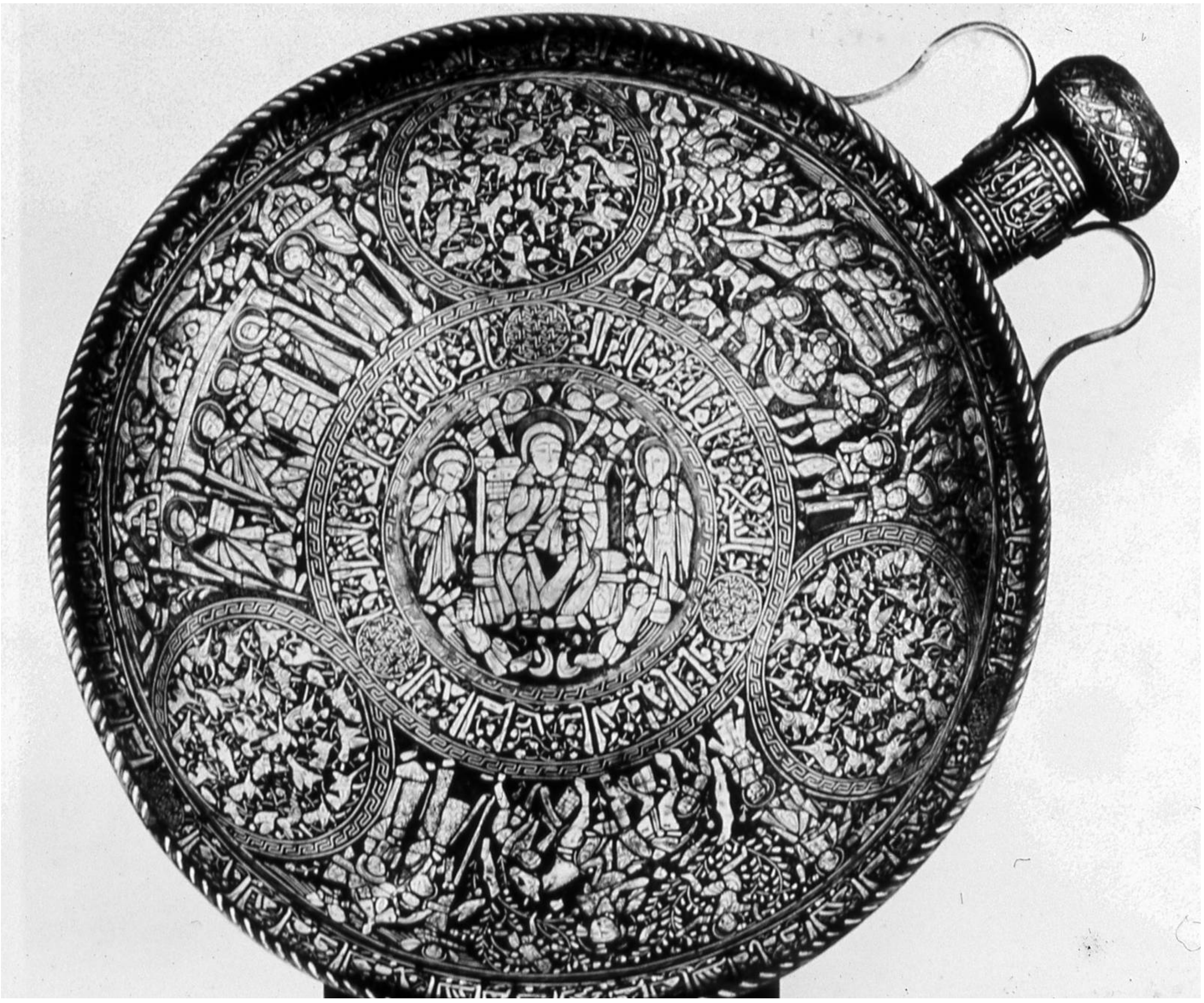

Figure 1. Freer Canteen (front): brass, hammered and worked on a lathe, chased and inlaid with silver and black organic material; probably Mesopotamia or Syria, mid-thirteenth century; diameter 36.9 cm; height of neck and spout 9.0 cm; weight 5,069 gm. Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Purchase, F1941.10.

With regard to the four major scenes depicting the life of Christ, it is generally agreed that their iconography parallels most closely the illustrated manuscript tradition of the Eastern Christian Churches of the time, and in particular the Vatican Library's Syrian Orthodox Lectionary[10] produced at the Monastery of Mar Mattai near Mosul. The Lectionary bears a colophon date previously read as 1220, but more recently convincingly shown to be 1260, in the early Ilkhanid period, when the Christian communities enjoyed a short-lived rise in status and influence.[11]

There are, however, two particular elements in the major scenes on the front of the Canteen that reward more careful scrutiny. First, in the scene of the Nativity the three kings have been replaced by the figure of a mounted Seljuq *atabeg*, wearing the traditional headgear of authority, the *sharbush*, and accompanied by a mounted bodyguard (fig. 3). I would suggest that a substitution of this kind would be more appropriate to a zone under *atabeg* rule, such as the Jazira under Badr al-Din Lu'lu',[12] rather than a western Syrian Ayyubid or Crusader context. Second, in the front central roundel the Virgin and Child are flanked by a turbaned figure on their left and a bare-headed patriarch on their right (fig. 4). Might there be a Jaziran context in which such juxtapositions might appear appropriate?

By a pool some thirty kilometres southeast of Mosul lies the shrine of Mar Behnam the Martyr (figs 5 and 6). Known also as *Dayr al-Khidr* and *Dayr al-Khidr Ilyas*, it was revered equally by Muslims, Christians, Jews, Yazidis and Mongols. From its foundation c. 382 CE, at the place of martyrdom of a local Christian Prince of Ashur, named

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[10] MS. Syriaco 559.

[11] Jean-Maurice Fiey, 'Hulagu, Doquz Khatun … et Six Ambons?', *Le Muséon*, 88 (1975), pp. 59–64; and Pier Giorgio Borbone (forthcoming). I am indebted to Professor Borbone for his most helpful correspondence.

[12] A *terminus ante quem* would be provided by the Mongol sack of Mosul in 1262 and the flight of the son of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', al-Salih Isma'il, to the Mamluks.

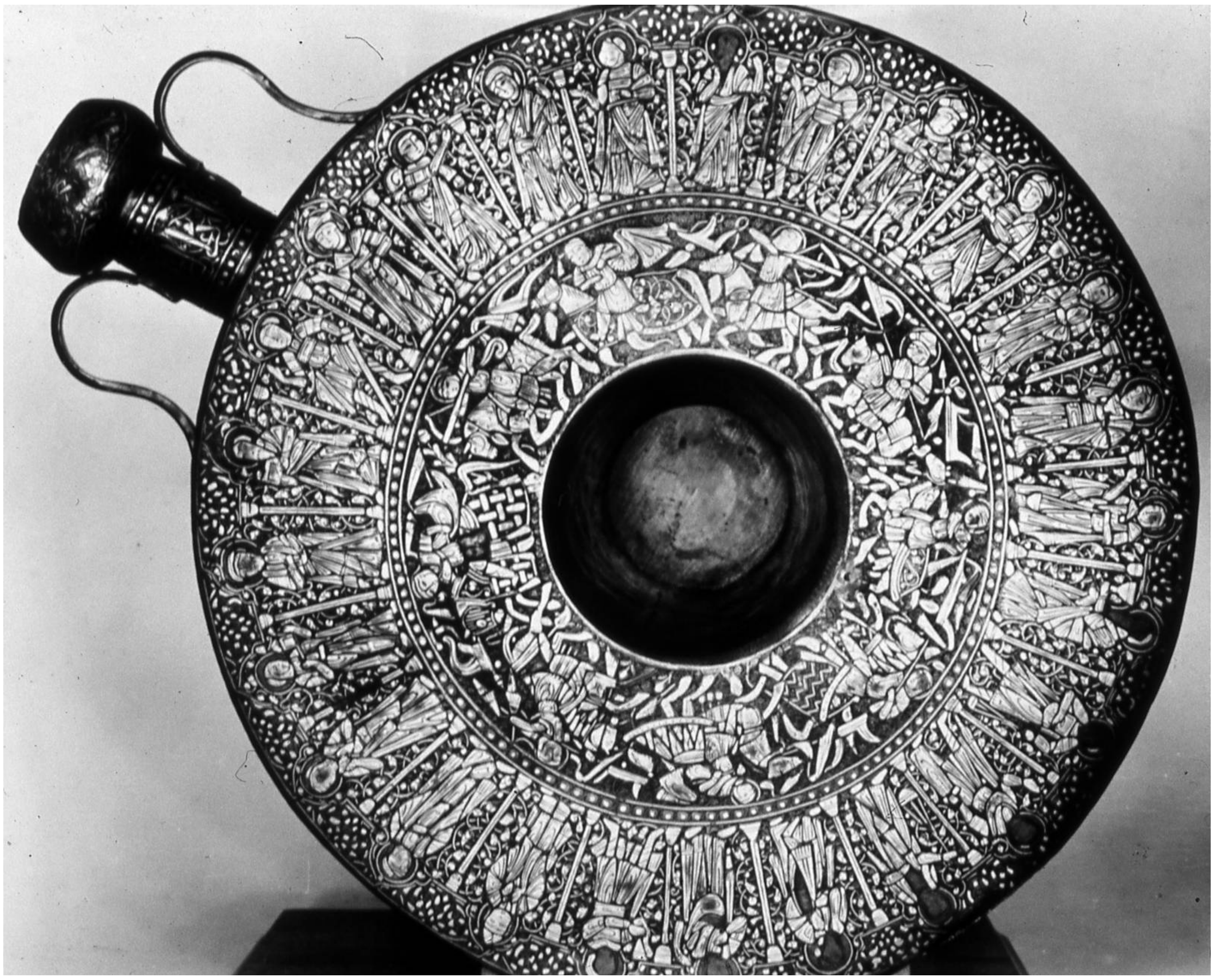

Figure 2. Freer Canteen (back).

Behnam, together with his sister Sara and their retinue,[13] the martyrion became a place of popular pilgrimage famed for its miracles. Its water with healing properties was deemed particularly efficacious for skin complaints and epilepsy. The site was also associated with the Biblical Ilyas (Elijah) and the Qur'anic prophet al-Khidr, both of whom hold strong water associations. In addition, the shrine was associated with Hazrat Jirjis (St George),[14] the warrior saint *par excellence* of the Eastern Christian Churches, who, according to Arab historians such as Tabari, was martyred in Mosul in the fourth century CE. Hazrat Jirjis was revered as a patron of the city, together with the Virgin Mary and Mar Matta, all of whom were also associated with the shrine. Bas-reliefs of Hazrat Jirjis and Mar Behnam, in the guise of warrior saints, probably date from renovations carried out to the shrine in the second half of the thirteenth century; a monastery was added in 1248 and expanded in 1295.[15] The shrine was also famed for its treasures.[16]

Such a multi-layered identity as that of the shrine of Mar Behnam offers a scenario that would lend itself to composite religious iconography. For example, the figures on either side of the Virgin in the central roundel would be correctly attired to represent a turbaned prophet of the Qur'anic tradition, such as al-Khidr, and a bare-headed patriarch such as Ilyas or the Christian monk, Mar Matta. The knightly exercises on the back of the object could

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[13] Prince Behnam was converted, while on a hunting trip, by Mar Matta, the eponymous founder of the monastery where the Vatican Lectionary was produced, who also cured the Princess Sara of a serious skin complaint.

[14] On the conflation of St George with the Prophets Ilyas and al-Khidr see James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 11 (Edinburgh/New York: T & T Clark, 1920), pp. 81–82.

[15] A. Abdal, *Some Historical Vestiges of the Convent of St. Behnam the Martyr near Mosul* (Beirut: Syriac Catholic Patriarchy of Antioch, 1954), pp. 4 ff. The monastery underwent rebuilding in 1901 and again in the 1990s: see Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 102–103.

[16] In 1295, in the reign of the Ilkhan Baydu, the shrine was looted by Mongols; the Ilkhan, incensed at this outrage, ordered all the treasures to be returned together with a personal donation, and the following inscription in Uighur script added to the monastery: 'May the peace of Khidr [the healer] Elias, the friend of God, come to the khan, his barons and his wife, and remain with them' (Baumer, *The Church in the East*, p. 102).

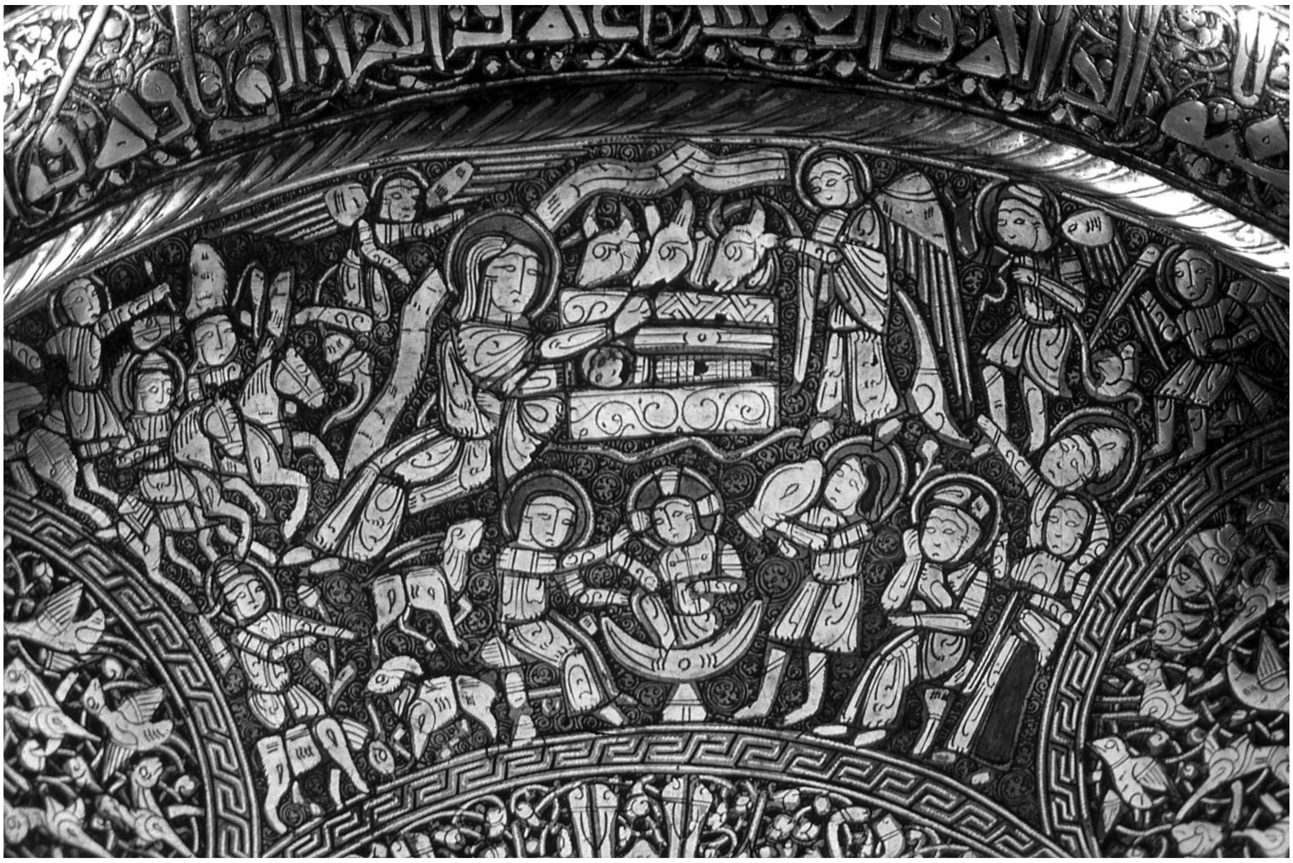

Figure 3. Freer Canteen (front, Nativity scene).

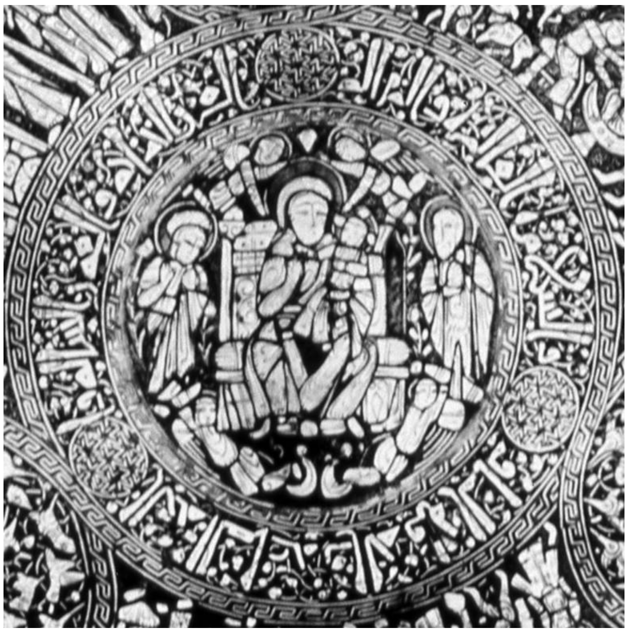

Figure 4. Freer Canteen (front, Virgin and Child enthroned with supporters).

reflect the ideals of the warrior saints and princes venerated by local Christians and Muslims alike. Since Mosul's army, on occasion, fought in Syria alongside the Ayyubids,[17] the appearance of Crusader-style horse armour and crossbows could perhaps reflect battlefield loot paraded on special occasions.

The Freer Canteen is a flask designed for transporting and dispensing a liquid, and healing water would be appropriate. Its structure would lend itself to dispensing holy water either within the shrine, or to displaying it in public procession on feast days on the side-pommel of a saddle, born by a mule or perhaps a camel because of its weight.[18] The renovations and extensions to the complex that were performed in 1248 suggest that at that period the shrine was in funds, and it is also close in date to Ibn Sa'id's visit to the area in 1250, when he noted that high-class inlaid metalwork was being produced in Mosul. By the same token, the Freer Canteen would have made a magnificent gift from a local wealthy ruler or citizen (Muslim or Christian) to another ruler, grandee, or even high ranking cleric or ecclesiastical institution. As a gift 'for export' it would have carried the

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[17] See Douglas Patton, *Badr al-Din Lu'lu', Atabeg of Mosul, 1211–1259* (Seattle/London: University of Washington Press, 1991), p. 20.

[18] Transport by pack animal invites the speculation that for reasons of balance the Freer Canteen may originally have been one of a pair, either identical or complementary.

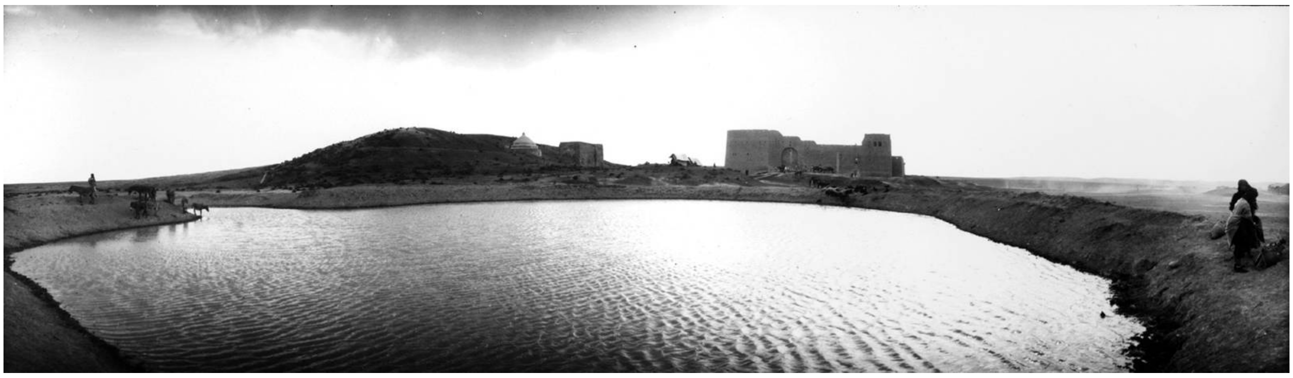

Figure 5. Shrine and Monastery of Mar Behnam the Martyr, southeast of Mosul. Courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, no. M_016, dated May 1909.

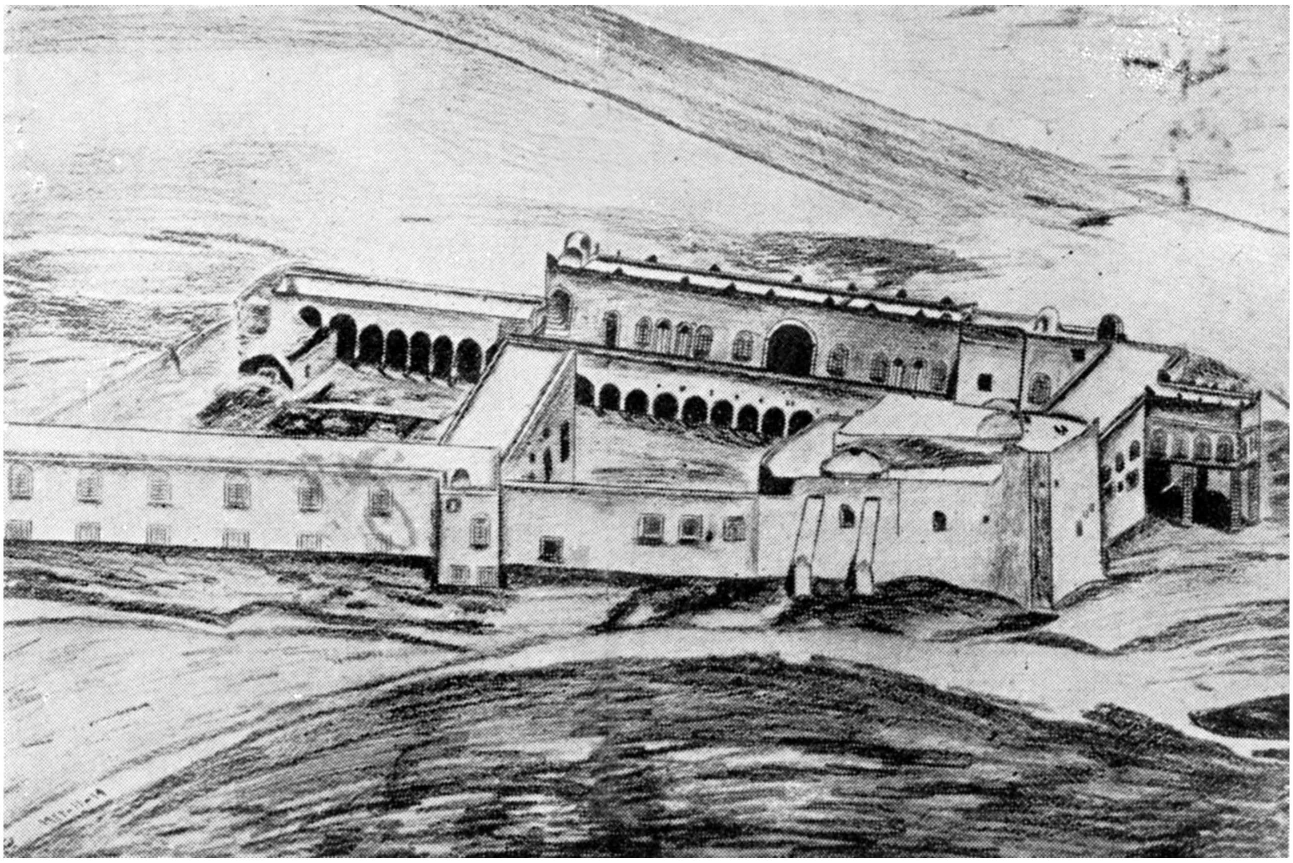

Figure 6. Shrine and Monastery of Mar Behnam the Martyr, southeast of Mosul. After Abdal (1954), [p. 1].

additional cachet of the shrine's *baraka* ('blessing') through its liquid contents.

The shrine of Mar Behnam does not provide obvious answers to all of the conundrums raised by this vessel, and much research remains to be done. However, the purpose of this paper has been to return the Freer Canteen and its provenance to the arena of scholarly debate; and to show that in seeking its context not only Crusader Jerusalem but also the Jazira, with its indigenous vibrant and interactive multi-religious society, especially through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, both justifies and rewards serious consideration.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my warmest gratitude to Massumeh Farhad for permitting the removal of the Canteen from exhibition in 2004 for a brainstorming session with herself, Julian Raby, Heather Ecker and Amy Landau.

I owe a considerable debt to them for their insights and encouragement. I also owe particular thanks to Rachel Ward and James Allan for invaluable guidance and advice; and to Robert and Carole Hillenbrand and the participants at the Edinburgh workshop for their helpful comments. An expanded article on the Freer Canteen, by Heather Ecker and myself, is due to appear shortly in *Ars Orientalis* 42. While the general argument in both articles remains the same, some views expressed here have subsequently been modified or revised.

Mamluk Textiles

Maria Sardi

The Mamluks, who ruled over Egypt and Syria from 1250 to 1517, showed a remarkable inclination towards the arts. The architecture and artefacts they patronised are frequently characterised by meticulous decoration of high aesthetic merit. The same refined taste was mirrored in their appearance and lifestyle, which were apparently imbued with splendour.[1] Mamluk society was fashion-conscious and fond of textiles. Woven fabrics, in addition to their utilitarian functions, had great social importance: they served as indicators of status, military rank and profession, as well as religious and ethnic identity.[2] Thanks to elegant workmanship and a constant demand, high-quality fabrics were considered a secure and safe investment. People of the middle and upper classes stored them with special care in order to hand them down or, as a last resort in times of financial crisis, to sell them.

In terms of courtly life, exquisite fabrics served as costumes, parade equipment and furnishings; textiles also played an integral role in Mamluk protocol and ceremonies. This role was manifest from the first moment of the Mamluk sultan's accession to the throne: the ceremony of the investiture, and the sultan's attire itself, were imbued with various forms of symbolism. The black of his investiture costume – the same colour as that of the ‘Abbasid caliph – was consciously intended to underline the link between the Mamluk sultanate and the ‘Abbasid caliphate, thus legitimising the sultan's power.[3] An alignment with the appearance of ‘Abbasid sovereignty was also highlighted by the style of the sultan's investiture robe, which was purely religious rather than military in character, and thus rather different from what one might have expected from the ruler of a military state. As Mayer has noted, during his investiture the Mamluk sultan wore a turban of a type never worn by amirs, as well as a robe, cloak and coat that were otherwise to be seen on shaykhs only.[4]

Most of the royal insignia that accompanied the ruler on state processions also consisted of rich textiles.[5] The *ghashiya* (the royal saddle borne before the sultan) was entirely covered with gold embroidery,[6] whilst the royal parasol[7] and the numerous banners and flags of the Mamluk army were all made of fine yellow silk – yellow being the official colour of the Mamluk sultanate.[8] All of these items were used to delineate hierarchies and to enrich ceremonial parades with glittering displays of luxury. The silk materials, golden threads and yellow colours were carefully chosen to give a luminous and dazzling impression, stunning both the subjects of the Mamluk rulers and potential enemies with the wealth and power of the state.

In any Mamluk procession, religious scholars and high officials were arranged hierarchically, according to their rank, next to the sultan and his emblems. Major distinctions were demarcated in the attire of the ‘men of the pen' as compared with that of the ‘men of the sword', i.e. civil and military officials respectively. Therefore, in a society where clothing indicated rank, the custom of offering a *khil‘a* (robe of honour) to express the sultan's favour towards one or other of his subjects, or to signify the appointment of a Mamluk official to a new post, became common practice.[9] So common was this phenomenon that soon the phrase 'to be invested with a *khil'a*' came to mean the acquisition of a post.[10] After this bestowal the appointee left the Citadel of Cairo proudly arrayed in his new garment, thus signalling his new status to all who laid eyes on him.

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[1] For an insight into the art and architecture of the Mamluks see Esin Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 1981); Salah Ahmed el-Banasi (ed.), *Mamluk Art: The Splendour and Magic of the Sultans* (s.l.: Museum with no Frontiers, 2001); Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks: A History of the Architecture and its Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

[2] For a survey of Mamluk clothing and its role in Mamluk society, see Leon A. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume: A Survey* (Geneva: Albert Kundig, 1952).

[3] The black colour of the caliph's attire was introduced by Mansur (r. 754–775) and had since that point become the characteristic colour of the ‘Abbasid caliphate, with the temporary exception of Ma'mun who attempted to introduce green as the colour of the caliph's raiment. Reuben Levy, ‘Notes on Costume from Arabic Sources', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 20 (1935), pp. 319–338. Likewise, after Sultan al-Zahir Baybars I (r. 1260–1277) had received in Cairo (in 1261) the alleged last ‘Abbasid caliph, and kept for himself the title of the legal protector of Sunni Islam, Mamluk sultans adopted the black turban and the black robe as the official insignia of the sultanate. Étienne Marc Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Égypte*, 2 vols (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund, 1840–1845), vol. 1, p. 134. For the relationship between the ‘Abbasid caliphs and the Mamluk sultans see Peter Malcolm Holt, ‘Some Observations on the Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 47 (1984), pp. 501–507.

[4] Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, p. 15.

[5] For a complete list and a brief description of the Mamluk emblems of royalty see William Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans 1382–1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghri Birdi's Chronicles of Egypt* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), pp. 84–85.

[6] According to al-Qalqashandi's description, the *ghashiya* was ‘decorated with gold, so that the observer would take it to be made entirely of gold. It is borne before him [the sultan] when riding in state procession for parades, festivals, etc … The one who holds it up in his hands turning it to right and left' (Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a‘sha* [Cairo, n.d., vol. IV], p. 7, translated and cited in Peter Malcolm Holt, ‘The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 38/2 [1975], p. 243). The *ghashiya* of Sultan al-Zahir Baybars was also adorned with precious stones: see Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1886), pp. 32–33.

[7] The royal parasol, made of yellow silk embroidered with gold thread, was crowned with a gilded bird mounted over a small gilded cupola. It was held above the sultan's head during processions of state. See Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, vol. 1, p. 134.

[8] The Mamluks proudly adopted yellow as their official colour from the Ayyubids, who had earlier introduced it into their public ceremonies. For a thorough discussion of the colours used in medieval Egypt see Ahmed Zéki Pacha, ‘Notice sur les couleurs nationales de l'Égypte musulmane', *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, 2 (1919), pp. 61–95.

Dress codes were imposed not only on the high amirs and their mamluks (guards), but also on the sultan himself. Each ceremonial occasion called for a certain type of costume and colour, dictated at all times by the strict protocol of the court. Any deviation from court protocol caused negative comment and was not readily accepted. In this context, al-Maqrizi passed judgment on Sultan al-Mu'ayyad (r. 1412–1421) and Sultan Barsbay (r. 1422–1438) for wearing their 'audience outfits' in public.[11] In a similar vein, the Mamluk chronicler Ibn Taghribirdi also criticised Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 1438–1453) for appearing at the ceremonial inauguration of the winter season dressed in the wrong colours.[12]

Being constantly involved in diplomatic relations, political games and trade negotiations, the Mamluks habitually used sophisticated fabrics as diplomatic gifts. These textiles, in the form of both tailored garments and uncut pieces, displayed the excellent craftsmanship of the Mamluk weavers whilst also serving on occasion to communicate complex and sensitive political messages. An instance of this can be seen in the gift offered by the Sharif of Mecca (at that time under Mamluk rule) to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, in reciprocity for the latter's donation of 'nine thousand new florins with Mehmed's seal' to Mecca following the conquest of Constantinople. The Sharif's gift included twenty turban cloths soaked in water from the *zamzam* well, and the veil of Mecca's door made under Mamluk patronage. As Elias Muhanna implies, the selection of these particular items was undoubtedly intended to convey a double message: firstly, as religious textiles such pieces implied a positive recognition of the Sunni Muslim partnership of the Mamluk and the Ottoman states against the menace of the infidels; and secondly, these religious artefacts also carried an implied assertion of the Mamluks' position as 'the ultimate arbiters of political legitimacy on the Muslim world'.[13]

As can be judged from the preceding paragraphs, elaborately woven textiles were also employed by the Mamluks as religious symbols. Chief amongst these was the *kiswa*, the woven covering of the Ka'ba. It was a textile of immense size offered annually to the guardians of the sacred precinct in Mecca. It was mainly composed of silk cloth lined with other materials, obviously subject to religious restrictions. We read, for example, that the covering sent to Mecca in 1327 by Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad was made of black silk lined with linen.[14] In general, the *kiswa* consisted of several pieces[15] decorated with gold brocaded medallions with Qur'anic inscriptions, along with the name of the donor and, in several cases, the blazons of the sultan.[16]

In addition to the honorific donation of the *kiswa*, which privilege was reserved for the rulers of Egypt after 1261, the Mamluks also inaugurated other traditions of fabric donation for the sacred precinct: these included the curtain (*sitara*) for the door of the Ka'ba, the covering for its interior, and coverings for the shrines located near it. The Mamluk propensity for clothing the shrines around the Ka'ba led to certain excesses. In 1448 a fabric was sent to Mecca for the covering of the *Hijr Isma'il*, the site of the graves of Isma'il and his mother. But, since such a covering was not yet a customary practice at that point, the fabric was in fact stored in the Ka'ba for more than a year before it was finally placed on the *Hijr* in the beginning of 1450. This custom does not seem to have found any imitators, and can be judged something of a failure.[17]

Another woven item, similarly imbued with religious associations, was introduced by the Mamluks. This was the *mahmal*, a ceremonial palanquin which accompanied the pilgrim caravan that departed annually from Egypt to Mecca, from the time of Sultan Baybars (r. 1260–1277) onwards. According to al-Qalqashandi's description the *mahmal* was 'a tent made of yellow embroidered silk, topped by a spherical finial made of gilded silver'.[18] Material evidence is provided by the extant *mahmal* of Sultan Qansawh al-Ghuri (r. 1500–1516), presently housed in the Topkapi Museum, Istanbul.[19] It takes the form of a pyramid on a rectangular base reaching a total height of 3.65 metres including the wooden section at the top of the pyramid. It is entirely covered with fabrics made of yellow silk lined with white linen. Each of the small curtains covering the three openings of the square frame bears the epigraphic blazon of the sultan with appliqué letters of red fabric.[20] On each of the four sides of the pyramid a tear-shaped medallion includes the sultan's titles and benedictory inscriptions,[21] while a running text on the top of the pyramid's base includes a vocative text relating to the *Hajj*.[22] The fringes found at the top and bottom of the pyramid are made of green silk.

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[9] In his *Khitat* the Mamluk historian Maqrizi gives a detailed account of the different types of robes of honour offered to each class. See the translation of the relevant passages of the *Khitat* in Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, vol. 2, pp. 72–74.

[10] For more on the term *khil'a* see Norman A. Stillman, 'Khil'a', in Clifford Edmund Bosworth *et al*. (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 5, pp. 6–7.

[11] Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, p. 26.

[12] William Popper (ed.), *Extracts from Abu'l-Mahasin ibn Taghri Birdi's Chronicle, entitled Hawadith al-duhur fi mada'l-ayyam wa'l-shuhur* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1931), vol. 8, pp. 446 ff. According to Mamluk protocol the official signal for the beginning of the winter or summer period was given by the Sultan's ceremonial change of clothes. At the end of the summer he put on coloured woollen garments to mark the beginning of the winter season, while at the end of the spring he inaugurated the beginning of the summer by putting on light white clothes, preferably of cotton from Baalbek.

[13] Elias Muhanna, 'The Emperor's New Clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk gift exchange in the Fifteenth Century', paper presented at the Historians of Islamic Art Association *majlis*, February 2007. I am indebted to the author for access to his article prior to its publication in *Muqarnas*, 27 (2010), pp. 189–207.

[14] Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'La voile de la Ka'ba', *Studia Islamica*, 2 (1954), p. 14.

[15] The number of pieces of cloth making up the *kiswa* depended on the technological capabilities of the time. For example, when Ibn Jubayr described the *kiswa* of his own time in 1183, he recorded that it was made from thirty-four pieces. In 1908 no more than eight pieces were used. Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'Notes sur la Mekke et Médine', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (1918), pp. 331, 338.

[16] Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'La voile', p. 15.

[17] Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'Notes sur la Mekke', p. 337.

[18] Although the appearance of this litter allegedly dates back to the reign of the Mamluk Sultana Shajarat al-Durr (r. 1250), the earliest historical reference to the Egyptian *mahmal* is connected with Sultan Baybars and dates from 1266. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, 'The Mahmal Legend and the Pilgrimage of the Ladies of the Mamluk Court,' *Mamluk Studies Review*, 1 (1997), p. 89.

[19] Published in Jacques Jomier, *Le Mahmal et la caravane égyptiènne des pèlerins de La Mecque (XIIe-XXe siècles)* (Paris: Histoire de l'Afrique du nord, 1952), p. 11, n. 3. A black-and-white photo of this palanquin first appeared in *La Turquie kémaliste* (August 1941).

The name of the Mamluk sultan was embroidered upon it, and the palanquin was given a prominent place in the procession to mark the departure of the pilgrimage caravan. There can be little doubt that by this means the Mamluk rulers intended to remind the thousands of pilgrims present at this ceremony of both the sovereignty of the Mamluk sultans, and their supremacy amongst Muslim rulers.

Unlike these ceremonial items displayed in public, utilitarian textiles used for the interior decoration of the palaces of the Mamluks, as well as those made from less costly material and used by the general populace, are not described in great detail within medieval accounts. Hence, the study of this class of textiles is based mostly on the extant fabrics now housed in various museums around the world. Despite their fragmentary condition the extant pieces cover the entire gamut of materials, techniques and motifs known to be in use throughout the Mamluk era. However, what have not survived are any samples of the silks embellished with precious stones and furs which were so often praised by locals and foreign visitors to the Mamluk lands.[23] Similarly absent are the fabrics made of sea-silk (known in Arabic as *suf al-bahr* [sea-wool] and *wabar al-samak* [fish-down]), the light and warm cloth made of the silky filaments of the *Pinna nobilis* mollusc, known to have been used by the Mamluk elite.[24]

In terms of materials, hundreds of linen, cotton, wool and silk pieces have survived. They are often adorned with metal threads, metal wire, studs, sophisticated buttons, silk tassels and pieces of coloured embroidered leather. As one would expect in the Mamluk empire, including as it did lands rich in flax plantations, a prominent place among the surviving pieces is taken by linen fabrics of all kinds.

As for decorative techniques, embroidery (fig. 1), inlay and overlay applied decoration (fig. 2), block printing (fig. 3), and interwoven decoration (figs 4, 5) are all represented amongst the extant Mamluk textiles. Applied motifs include geometric and floral patterns; affronted animals (fig. 6); bird-like motifs (fig. 1); arabesques; stripes; blazons (fig. 2); running quadrupeds (figs 4, 5) and birds arranged in bands;[25] fish swimming amidst crescents (see fig. 3); and inscriptions (see figs 4, 5).[26] The inscriptions express political salutations such as 'Glory to our master, the sultan, the king, may his victory be glorious' (see fig. 5) or repeated single words such as 'the learned', 'the just', 'glory', 'dominion', 'prosperity', 'affection' and others (see fig. 4). Less frequently, self-aggrandising texts (such as 'To whoever looks, I am the moon') or proverbs referring to the value and rewards of patience are also encountered. On items apparently made for the sultan his title is inscribed in a complete or abbreviated form, often in a mirrored symmetrical design.[27] The extant fabrics that bear the epigraphic blazon or name of a particular sultan are considerably fewer in number than those inscribed with generic royal titles, thus indicating that the latter were made in large quantities in the royal workshops, presumably to be used indiscriminately by any ruler or potential ruler. As for individual blazons, the wide range of simple and compound emblems that have survived reveal the polychrome character of the amiral insignia. Moreover, my discovery of two rare silk pieces bearing Mamluk blazons raises questions about Louise Mackie's statement that 'blazons are unknown in silk fabrics'.[28]

Although the nature of the patterns that are applied to any type of fabric are dependent on the material and the decorative techniques used in each case, there are several examples of textiles which share common motifs between

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[20] In the three bands of the medallion one can read: 'Abu'l-Nasr Qansawh' (on the upper band); 'Glory to our master, the sultan, al-Malik' (on the middle band); and 'al-Ghuri, may his victory be glorious' (on the lower band). See Jacques Jomier, 'Le Mahmal du sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri (début XVIe siècle)', *Annales Islamologiques*, 11 (1972), pp. 184–185. The epigraphic blazon of Sultan Qansawh al-Ghuri can be seen in his mausoleum as well as in other buildings in Cairo erected at this time. See also a similar roundel made of stone, now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (inv. no. 6731), illustrated in Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam*, p. 215, fig. 110.

[21] On two of the pyramids' sides the aforementioned text is inscribed within a tear-shaped medallion divided into three horizontal bands. On the two other sides the following text is inscribed in identical medallions: 'Abu'l-Nasr Qansawh' (on the upper band); 'Glory to our master the sultan' (on the middle band); and 'al-Malik, al-Ashraf' (on the lower band). See Jomier, 'Le Mahmal'.

[22] For a French translation of the Arabic text see Jomier, 'Le Mahmal', pp. 185–187.

[23] For example, the 'fabrics brocaded with pearls and precious stones of every kind' found in the *dhahabiyya*, the royal boat of the Mamluk sultan, that Joos van Ghistele saw on his visit to Cairo in 1482–3. See Joos van Ghistele, *Voyage en Egypte de Joos van Ghistele, 1482–1483*, trans. and ed. Renée Bauwens-Préaux (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1976), pp. 156–157.

[24] Al-'Umari recounts that he had seen high officials in Damascus wearing clothes made of a costly fabric called in Egypt *wabar al-samak* ('poil de poisson' or 'fish-down'). He adds that he had seen in Cairo officers of lower rank dressed in garments of the same material: see Ibn Fadl Allah al-Omari, *Masalik el Absar fi Mamalik el Amsar, I, L'Afrique, moins l'Égypte*, trans. and ed. Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1927), p. 126.

[25] See for example a fine silk piece with metal threads bearing bands animated with running gazelles and birds, Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 15554.

[26] For colour photographs of figs 3, 5 and 6, see Maria Sardi, 'Mamluk Textiles', *HALI*, 156 (2008), pp. 72–73.

[27] Cf. a silk damask shirt bearing the title 'al-Sultan' and 'al-Kamil' in a mirrored symmetrical design, housed in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (inv. no. 2740).

[28] Louise Mackie, 'Towards an understanding of Mamluk Silks: National and International Considerations', *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), p. 128. The first of these examples of blazons on Mamluk silks is the epigraphic blazon on the *mahmal* of Sultan Qansawh al-Ghuri, discussed above; the second is the blazon of the *dawadar* (royal secretary) depicted five times in a polylobed medallion on a silk fabric presently housed in an unspecified Italian collection. I am most grateful to my Ph.D. supervisor, Professor Doris Behrens-Abouseif, for alerting me to this fabric.

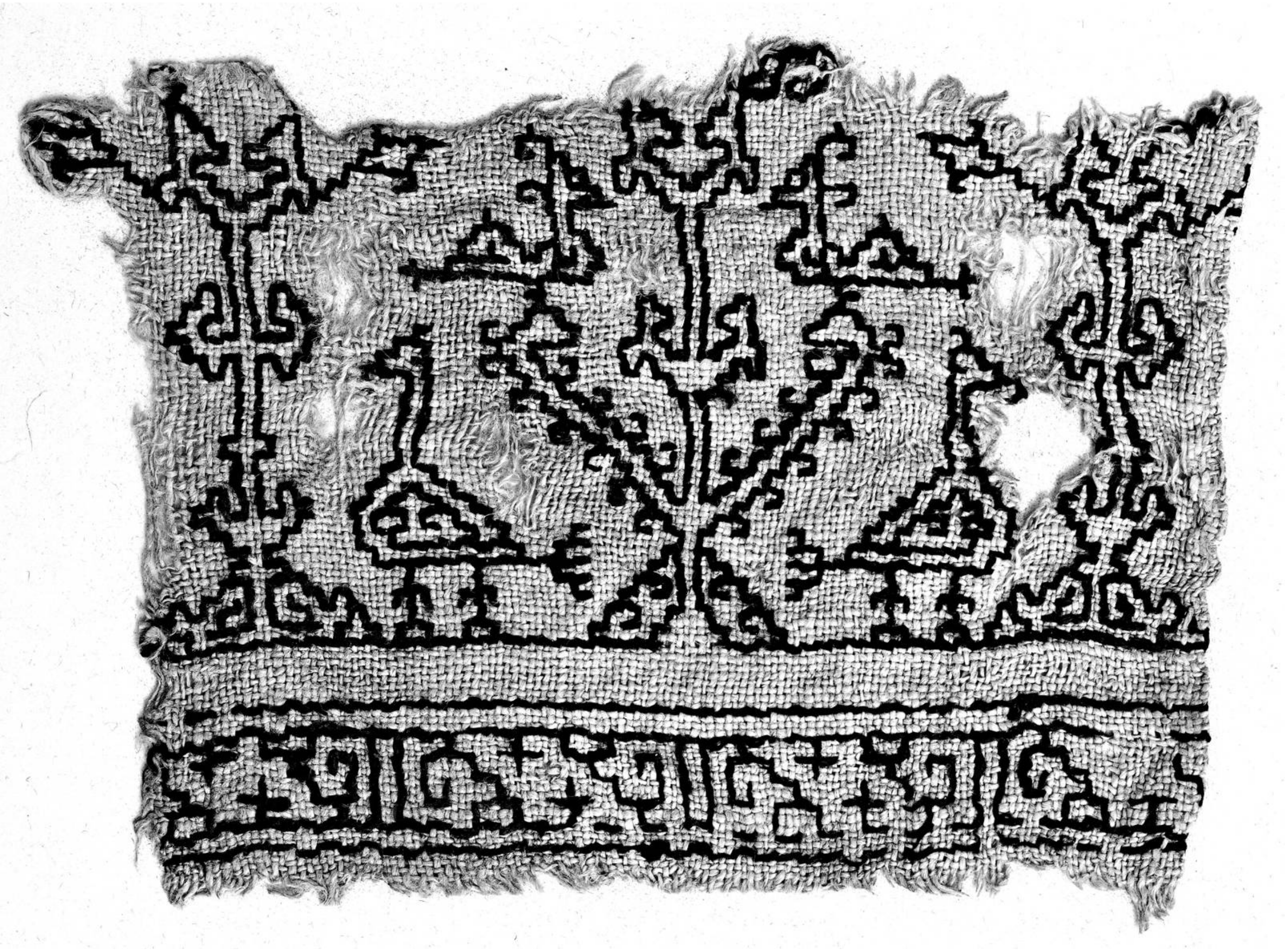

Figure 1. Benaki Museum, Athens (inv. no. 15943). H: 6.4 cm, L: 7.5 cm. Fragment of an undyed linen cloth bearing decoration of bird-like motifs and trees embroidered with blue silk thread.

various materials. A typical example is a damask silk shirt in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, bearing running quadrupeds, hares, affronted birds and rosettes that are depicted in a very similar fashion to those found on a printed linen fragment of the same period.[29] In other cases one decorative technique seems to imitate another: typical examples include a printed cotton bearing motifs that imitate the cross-stitches of Mamluk embroideries, and a fragmentary linen decorated with embroidered motifs in the fashion of appliqué.[30]

As for the colours of the fabrics in question, the wide variety of shades and the combinations of contrasting colours – still vivid after more than six centuries – reveal the superior craftsmanship of the cloth-dyers of the Mamluk era. Blue is the supreme colour of the surviving Mamluk silks. However, a few yellow, red, pink, green and brown damask silks have also come to light.[31] In most of the well-known silk lampas fragments of the era blue is reserved for the ground on which bright yellow, beige and green patterns are executed.[32] In embroideries, blue silk threads have mostly been used to decorate undyed linen and cotton fabrics (see fig. 1). Over time, however, red, brown, black, yellow, green and pink threads were also used alongside the blue ones. In printed examples blue (see fig. 3), red or greyish-black patterns are rendered on undyed linens and cottons.[33]

From the dye analysis executed as part of my research on samples from the Benaki Museum in Athens, the identification of the plants and colourants used became

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[29] Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, inv. no. 23903: see Patricia L. Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), p. 66. For the printed fabric housed in the same museum (inv. no. 14816), see Mackie, 'Towards an understanding of Mamluk Silks', p. 130, pl. 4.

[30] For the printed cotton (inv. no. EA 1990.462) see Ruth Barnes, *Indian Block Printed Textiles in Egypt, the Newberry Collection in the Ashmolean Museum,* 2 vols (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1997), vol. II, p. 134, fig. 455. The linen appliqué (inv. no. ROM 978.76.291) is published in Bethany Walkers, 'Rethinking Mamluk Textiles', *Mamluk Studies Review*, 4 (2000), p. 207, fig. 7.

[31] See for example a red damask (inv. no. I. 3214) housed in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin: Heinrich J. Schmidt, 'Damaste der Mamlukenzeit', *Ars Islamica*, 1 (1934), p. 103, fig. 6. A yellow silk damask bearing the name of Muhammad ibn Qalawun is housed in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (inv. no. 3899): see Baker, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 66.

[32] The silk lampas in the Cleveland Museum of Art (inv. no. 39.40) known as 'the mantle of the Virgin' is a typical example of a multicoloured Mamluk silk: see Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam*, pp. 232–233, no. 116.

[33] For printed fabrics with red, blue and grayish-black patterns respectively see Atıl, pp. 237–239, nos 120–122.

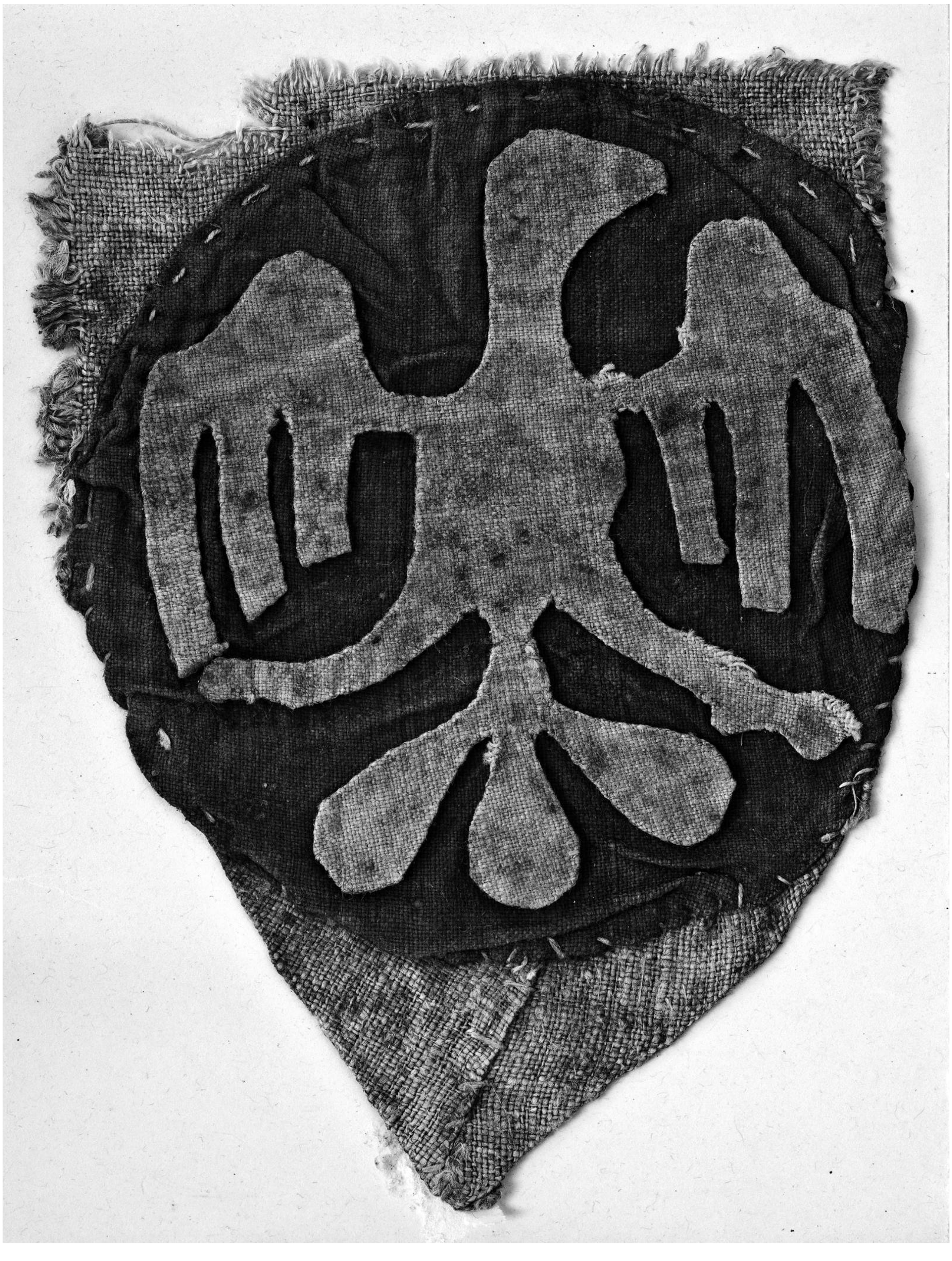

Figure 2. Benaki Museum, Athens (inv. no. 16074). H: 14 cm, L: 10.5 cm. Fragment of a Mamluk blazon bearing overlay applied decoration. Pieces of undyed cotton have been cut in the shape of an eagle and sewn on a red roundel of the same material. Both layers are attached to an undyed linen ground.

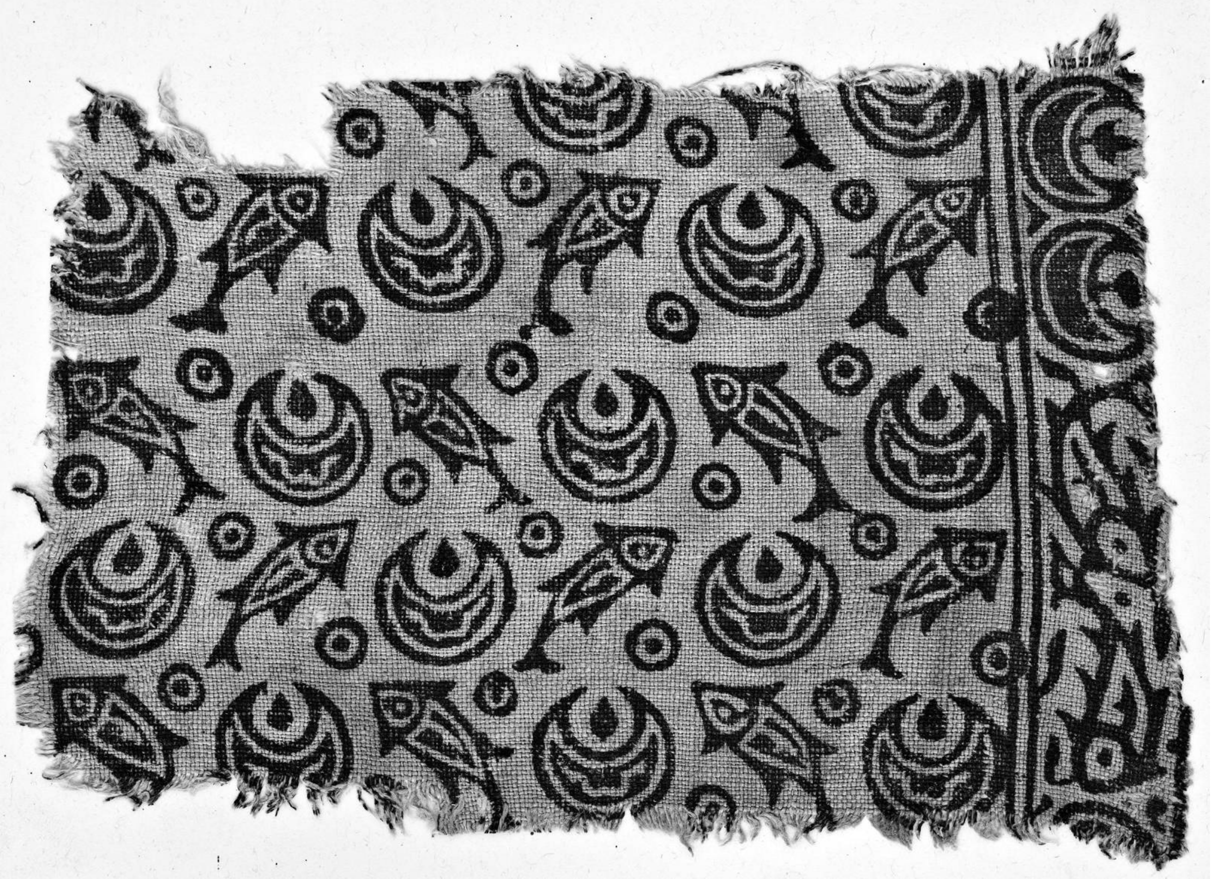

Figure 3. Benaki Museum, Athens (inv. no. 16388). H: 13 cm, L: 17.2 cm. Fragment of an undyed linen cloth decorated with a blue printed design of fish and crescents.

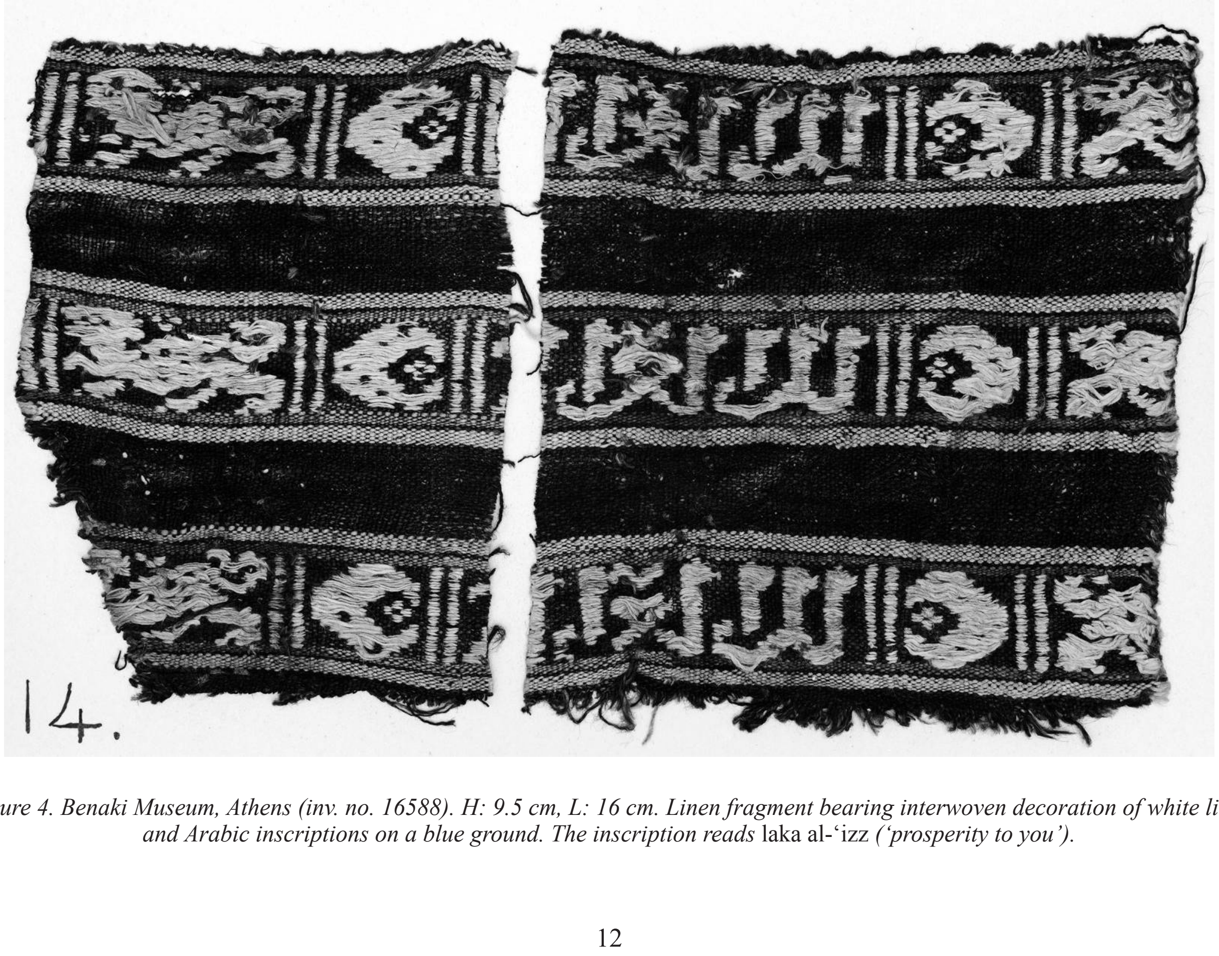

Figure 4. Benaki Museum, Athens (inv. no. 16588). H: 9.5 cm, L: 16 cm. Linen fragment bearing interwoven decoration of white lions and Arabic inscriptions on a blue ground. The inscription reads laka al-ʻizz *(ʻprosperity to youʼ).*

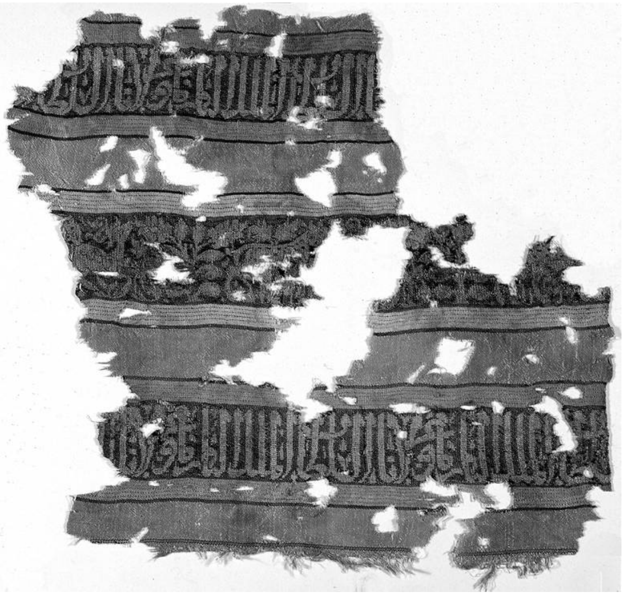

Figure 5. Benaki Museum, Athens (inv. no. 15093). H: 26.5 cm, L: 25 cm. Fragment of a silk (garment) bearing interwoven decoration of bands filled with running gazelles, leopards, plants and repeated Arabic inscriptions. The motifs are executed in dark brown, beige and turquoise on beige ground. The inscriptions read 'izz li-mawlana al-sultan al-malik al-nasir *('Glory to our master, the sultan al-Malik al-Nasir').*

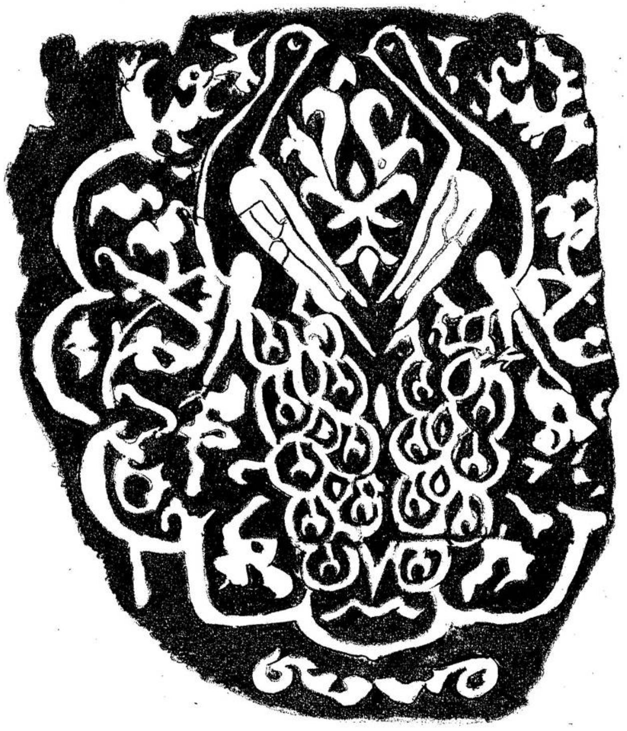

Figure 6. Benaki Museum, Athens (inv. no. 15739). Detail of a blue silk bearing interwoven decoration of yellow patterns, with repeated pairs of affronted birds (possibly peacocks) in polylobed medallions filled with peonies. Drawing by the author.

possible, thus revealing the sources and the methods used for the achievement of such bright and durable colours.[34]

Unlike the wealth of information that is provided by the surviving fabrics for studies of both style and material, there is little that can be extrapolated about their exact places of manufacture. Only one example bears any mark of origin, and most of them do not come from scientifically documented excavations.[35] Instead, the majority of the pieces now in museums were purchased from art dealers at the beginning of the twentieth century who routinely cut a single fabric into several pieces in order to offer it to more than one collector and thus maximise profit. As a result, we are now unable to form a clear picture of what a garment or a hanging originally looked like, and subsequently the purpose and status of a textile may be diminished or clouded from our view.[36] To this end, the fabrics coming from scientific excavations in the Mamluk sites of Gebel Adda in Nubia,[37] Qusayr al-Qadim in the Red Sea,[38] Bahnasa in Middle Egypt,[39] and elsewhere,[40] provide precious comparative material which, along with scant references in contemporaneous chronicles and travel accounts, have enabled me to put forward a more complete picture of Mamluk textile production. In the very rare instances that complete garments have come to light, useful information has been extracted as to cut, style, decoration and use. A typical example is a rare complete surviving pair of silk underpants: a recent study and radiocarbon dating have attributed this piece with certainty to the

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[34] During the research for my Ph.D. I had the opportunity to study more than two hundred fragments of Mamluk textiles, mostly unpublished, in the collection of the Benaki Museum in Athens. For the results of the dye analyses see my forthcoming thesis, *Mamluk Textiles: Fabrics in Context*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. I am indebted to Prof. Angelos Delivorrias (Director of the Benaki Museum), Dr Anna Ballian and Mina Moraitou (Curators of the Benaki Museum) for kindly granting me access to the collection and permitting the use of the photographs published in the present article.

[35] A small stamped inscription in black ink that reads '… al-Asyuti' on a Mamluk silk winding-sheet excavated in Gebel Adda in Upper Egypt is probably the stamp of an atelier.

[36] A representative example can be seen in the case of the fragments of a fine Mamluk silk that were sold separately to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and to the Greek collector Antonis Benakis (see fig. 3). My extensive research in museum collections has already brought together further instances of fragmentary pieces that were once part of the same fabric, and will hopefully reveal still more examples of this phenomenon in due course.

[37] For some interesting findings excavated in Gebel Adda, see Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, 'Unearthing History: Archaeological Textiles in Egypt', *Hali*, 67 (1993), pp. 85–89.

[38] Mamluk textiles excavated in Qusayr al-Qadim have been published by Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, 'A Medieval Face-Veil from Egypt,' *Costume*, 17 (1983), pp. 33–38; *eadem*, 'Two Children's Galabiyehs from Quseir al-Qadim, Egypt', *Textile History*, 18 (1987), pp. 133–142.

[39] For the textile finds in the Bahnasa excavations see Mohamed Abbas Selim and Patricia Lesley Baker, 'Textile Finds', in Albert Harvey Pincis and Huda al-Zahem (eds), *Bahnasa (Oxyrhynchus): Final Report of the Excavations (1985–87)* (Kuwait: Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, 2006), pp. 163–170.

[40] See for instance a girl's robe, dated to the Mamluk era, excavated in Lebanon in 1991 and published by Georgette Cornu and Oussama Kallab, 'Une robe de fillette libanaise d' époque mamluke', *Archéologie Islamique*, 5 (1995), pp. 123–132.

Mamluk era (1300–1370 CE).[41] Based on this find, dozens of fragmentary striped silks in museums' collections which had erroneously been considered to be earlier pieces can now be safely dated to the Mamluk period.[42]

To close, I hope that through this short paper an insight has been given into the fascinating world of Mamluk textiles. However, my efforts to put the surviving material into context have proved that the fabrics in hand have much more to reveal.[43]

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[41] Mieke van Raemdonck, 'Two Garments from Medieval Egypt in the Errera-Collection in Brussels', in Kristof d'Hulster and Jo Van Steenbergen (eds), *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen* (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), pp. 507–522.

[42] See for example several striped silks housed in the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, attributed by Isabella Errera to c. the tenth to twelfth centuries: Isabelle Errera, *Collection d'anciennes étoffes égyptiennes décrites par Isabelle Errera* (Brussels: H. Lamertin, 1916), pp. 185–187, nos 426–428, 430–433 and others. I would suggest a dating of c. 1300–1370 for a similar pair of trousers and part of a vest presently in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (inv. nos. 763-1898 and 778-1898). I am indebted to Dr Mariam Rosser-Owen, curator in the Department of Islamic Art in the V&A, for kindly granting me access to the textile collection, and to Lily Crowther for guiding me through the rich storeroom.

[43] I am grateful to Dr Margaret Graves for her advice and editing of this text.

THE CAPTIVATING POWER OF TEXTILES

Miriam Ali-de-Unzaga

This essay explores the fascination Moroccan rural textiles exercise upon a variety of people. To use a weaving analogy, this paper is akin to a textile that consists of three threads: first, Western contemporary collectors of Moroccan rural textiles; second, Moroccan rural society; and third, Moroccan rural weavers. The theoretical framework of 'the technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology', coined by Alfred Gell,[1] is used as the frame-loom to display the ways in which each of these three threads interact. This arrangement is intended to emphasise the ways in which which each thread is connected to the others, and, like a textile, the concluding remarks of this paper do not have a marked beginning or an end. Such 'thread construction' allows content to be released continuously: each thread is intertwined not only with current and local themes, but also with the past and with global events. Although the various contexts studied here are separated geographically or in time, their actions and involvements are more closely interwoven than is immediately obvious.

The production, usage and circulation of a huge variety of textiles developed and flourished under Islamic civilisation, to such an extent that it has been characterised as a civilisation with a 'textile mentality'.[2] The area now known as Morocco forms a significant part of this characterisation. Thanks to documentary sources – such as Arab chroniclers,[3] the Cairo Geniza papers,[4] and fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian and Spanish inventories as well as the accounts of European travellers and traders[5] – we know that Maghribi rural textiles have been ubiquitous since medieval times. To give an indication of the size of its historical textile trade, the Maghrib (today's Morocco) exported 21,409 woven pieces to Portugal in 1519.[6]

A number of French colonial scholars who studied North African material culture in the twentieth century stated that Moroccan rural society had been built on wool.[7] However, most contemporary Moroccanists, including historians and anthropologists, have tended, by and large, to overlook rural textiles and weaving activities. One could explain this neglect through the fact that textiles are so omnipresent that they are taken for granted. Hence, researchers have tended to regard textiles as items of no relevance to scholarship, ignoring their importance within social, cultural, religious, and economic processes.

In contrast to this scholarly lacuna, Western textile dealers and collectors have shown increasing interest in certain Moroccan rural textiles (henceforth referred to as 'MRT') since the 1990s, and they have organised exhibitions in museums and art galleries, as well as publishing books and catalogues based on their collections. MRT have only recently come to the attention of the general public; they do not enjoy the same prestige as urban Turkish or Iranian pieces, which have been present in European contexts since

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[1] Alfred Gell, 'Technology and Magic', *Anthropology Today*, 4/2 (1988), pp. 6–9; *idem*, 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', in Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (eds), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 40–67; *idem*, *Art and Agency: Towards a New Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[2] Maurice Lombard, *Les textiles dans le monde musulman du VII au XII siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1978), pp. 351–353; Lisa Golombek, 'The Draped Universe of Islam', in Priscilla Soucek (ed.), *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World: Papers from a Colloquium in Memory of Richard Ettinghausen* (New York: 1988), p. 34.

[3] Such as al-Idrisi (twelfth century CE), Ibn Khaldun (fourteenth century), Ibn Battuta (fourteenth century), and al-Mubarid (sixteenth century). See Robert B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles: Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1972).

[4] The Cairo Geniza papers consist of approximately 250,000 leaves, most of them written in Arabic with Hebrew characters. They were found in 1890 when a synagogue in old Cairo was renovated. The dates of the documents range from 956 to 1538 CE and geographically they range from al-Andalus, North Africa and Egypt to Syria, Yemen and India. These documents constitute a unique record of the social, economic, and cultural life of the time, as they deal with court depositions, legal activities, contracts of marriage, commercial transactions, public affairs, business letters, brides' trousseau lists, divorce settlements, wills, family correspondence, financial reports and salaries, as well as scholarly responses to problems. Even if the Cairo Geniza papers comprise mainly documents written by Jewish clerks and merchants, they provide crucial evidence to further our understanding of the daily lives of medieval Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities from the lower strata to the middle class. According to Goitein seventy percent of the business correspondence within these documents came from Maghribis. See Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities in the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah, vol. IV: Daily Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 15.

[5] Georges Marçais, *La Berbérie musulmane et l'Orient au moyen âge* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1946), p. 50; Robert Pinner, 'Non-Spanish Carpets from the Mediterranean Countries in Spanish Documents of the 15th to 17th centuries', in Robert Pinner and Walter B. Denny (eds), *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies II. Carpets of the Mediterranean Countries, 1400–1600* (London: Hali, 1986), p. 150; Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 47.

[6] Ali Amahan and Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Du signe à l'image: Le tapis marocain* (Casablanca: Lak International, 1995), p. 52.

[7] Emile Laoust, *Mots et choses berbères* (Paris: Challamel, 1920); *idem*, 'L'habitation chez les transhumants du Maroc central: I, La tente et le douar', *Hespéris* (1930), pp. 151–253; Prosper Ricard, 'Les arts marocains, situation et tendances', *Hespéris* (1922), pp. 444–448; A. Delpy, 'Note sur le tissage dans les Zemmour', *Cahiers des arts et techniques d'Afrique du nord* (1954), pp. 9–48; Jacques Berque, 'Remarques sur le tapis maghrébin', in Pierre Marthelot and André Raymond (eds), *Études maghrébines: Mélanges Charles-André Julien* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), pp. 13–24.

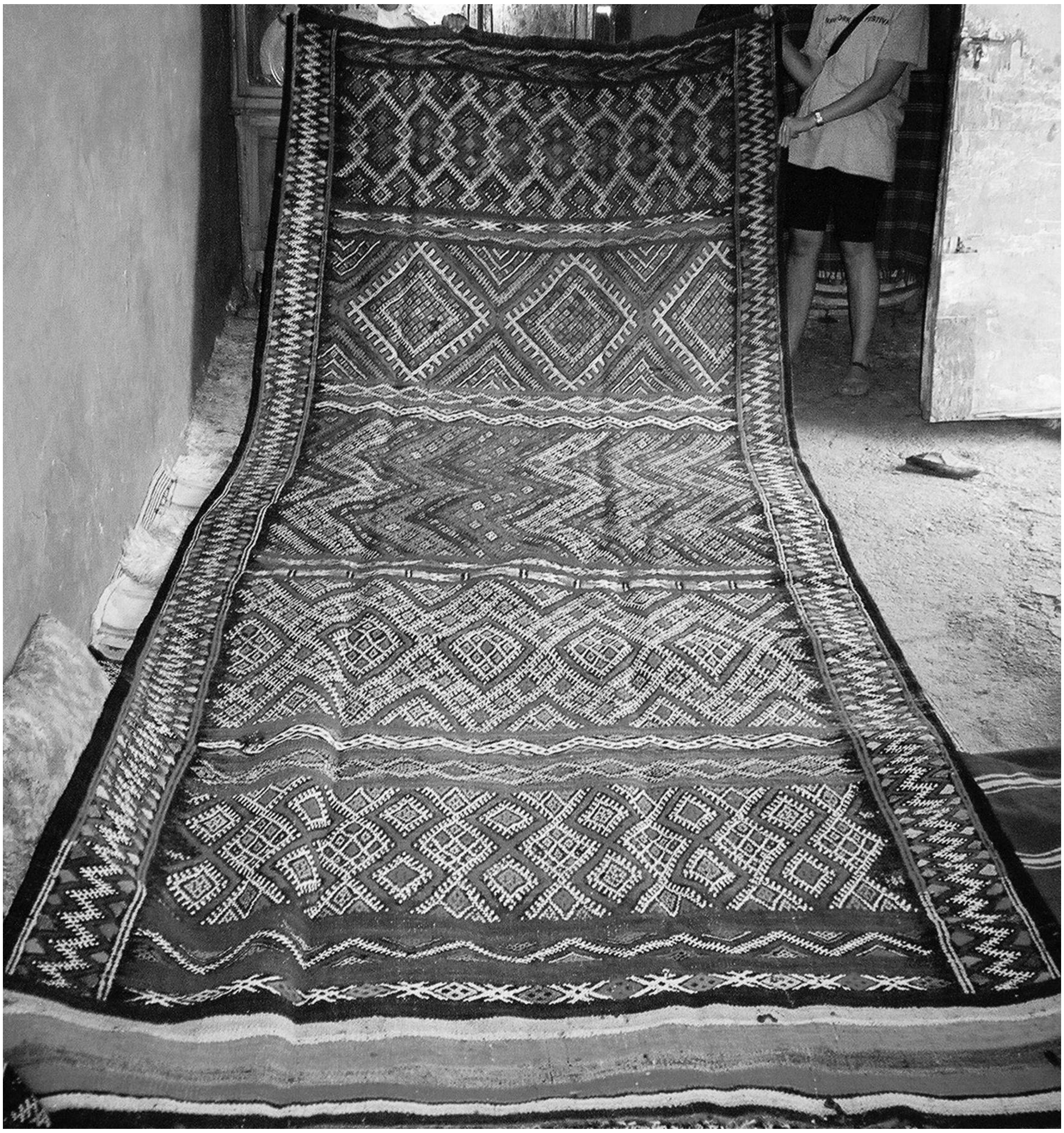

Figure 1. Symmetrical textile from the Middle Atlas Mountains.

at least the eighteenth century. However, the increasing number of exhibitions and textile fairs, and the growing taste among artistic and collecting circles in North America and Europe for MRT, show that these pieces are now in fashion.

Collectors of Textiles[8]

Contemporary MRT collecting has its antecedents in French colonial museums such as those founded in Rabat, Fez and Marrakesh in the 1920s. In recent decades a network of North American and European textile collectors have rediscovered these objects and have come to classify them as powerful artworks. They tend to define this power in terms of authenticity, artistic merit, and the asymmetry of the compositions: '[t]he most fascinating Moroccan carpets are those based on an absolute lack of symmetry and deformation of the themes they depict, which appear to be compressed by a mysterious field of forces'.[9] These collectors attempt to distance themselves from collectors of

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[8] The data presented here was gathered during my fieldwork with Western textile dealers and textile collectors, undertaken in 2004, 2005, and 2006. The list of publications focusing on MRT is too long to be included here. For a good overview see Hali, the periodical on carpets, textiles and Islamic art.

[9] Alfio Nicolosi, *Tappeti Rossi della Valle del Tennsift* (Rome: Casa di Nepi-il-Tappeto Parlante, 1998), p. 21.

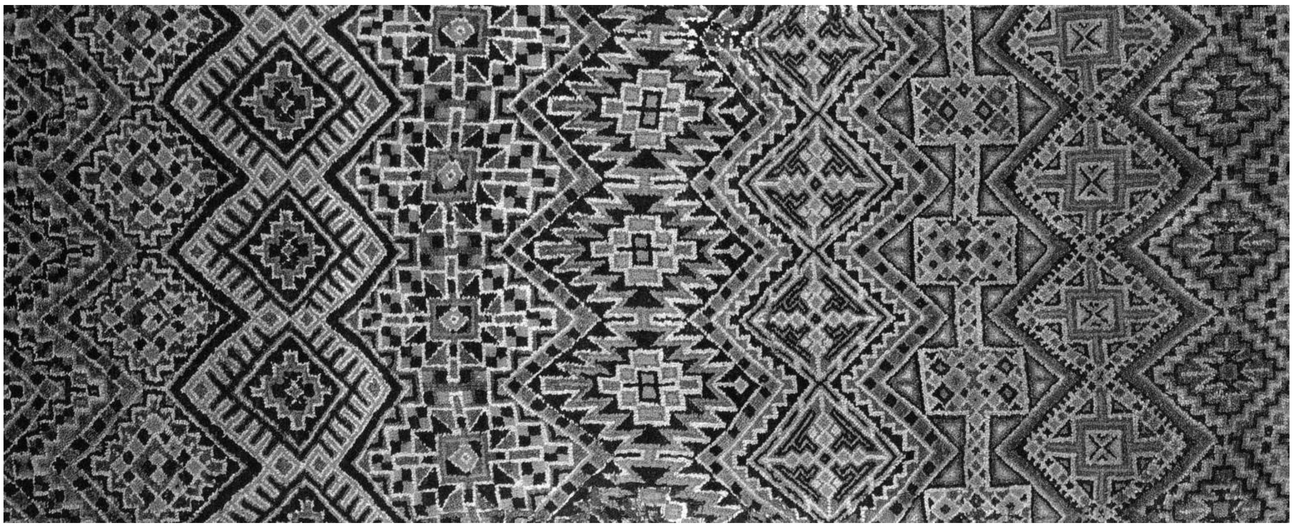

Figure 2. Symmetrical textile from the Middle Atlas Mountains.

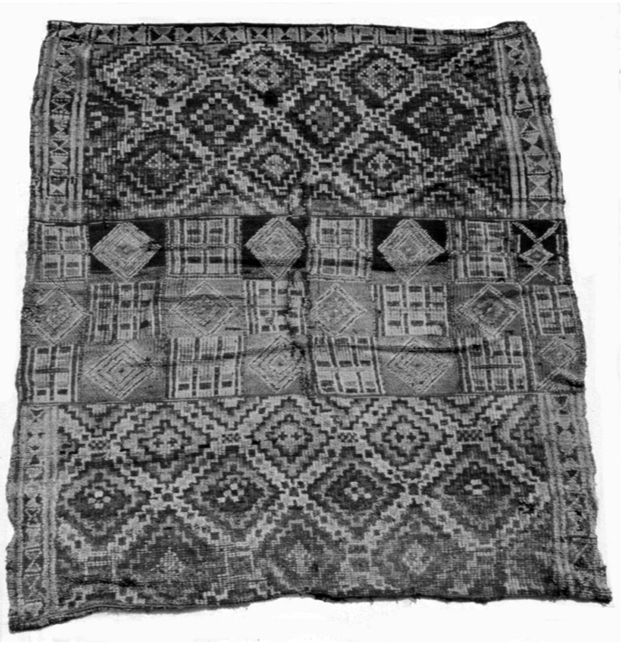

Figure 3. Symmetrical textile from the Middle Atlas Mountains.

Oriental carpets or eastern Islamic textiles, with the MRT collectors tending to regard the harmony and symmetrical compositions of the latter pieces as old-fashioned. For the collectors considered in this paper, total asymmetry is the ultimate element that equates Moroccan rural textiles with modern art: '[w]ith the avoidance of symmetry the pattern lacks a consistency of form, colour, and order; regular patterns, fragments of traditional signs are boldly destroyed or transferred into spontaneous designs. There is no other textile design in the world where we can experience such spontaneity and creativity as in Morocco'.[10]

Some MRT collectors argue that rural textiles can display two styles: the traditional and the artistic. The 'traditional style' (figs 1–3) uses regular symmetric harmonic motifs, which, in the view of the collectors in question, are defined and controlled by a traditional system imposed on the weavers by their society. In contrast, the 'spontaneous or artistic style' employs asymmetric motifs: regularity and perfection are of no importance because irregular, chaotic, disordered motifs and compositions are viewed as reflections of a creative and artistic character (figs 4–6).

Asymmetry seems to display captivating effects on these collectors. Could this correspond to what Gell termed the 'technology of enchantment'? He defined captivation or enchantment as a quality that 'casts a spell over us, it exploits innate psychological predispositions, so as to enchant the viewers …'.[11] It is the effect produced by an inscrutable technical expertise and virtuosity that causes the spectator to be trapped within the contemplation of an object. Therefore, for Gell, the technology of enchantment is the key to the efficacy of art, which defines all those strategies that human beings employ in order to 'enchant the other person and cause him/her to perceive social reality in a way favourable to the social interests of the enchanter'.[12]

Many MRT collectors would agree with Gell's assertion that 'the power of these artefacts rests partly on the fact that their origination is inexplicable except as a magical, supernatural occurrence'.[13] Gell also argued that some patterns are truly 'mind traps' that 'hook' the observer and cause him to relate in a certain way to the object. In his view, 'trying to grasp the complete mathematical and geometrical basis of an intricate Oriental carpet is a continuous unfinished business, the pattern is inexhaustible, the relationship between carpet and owner for life'.[14]

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[10] Richard Hersberger, *Teppich-Bilder, vom Atlas bis Tibet* (München: Muttenz, 2004), pp. 18–19.

[11] Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 7.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

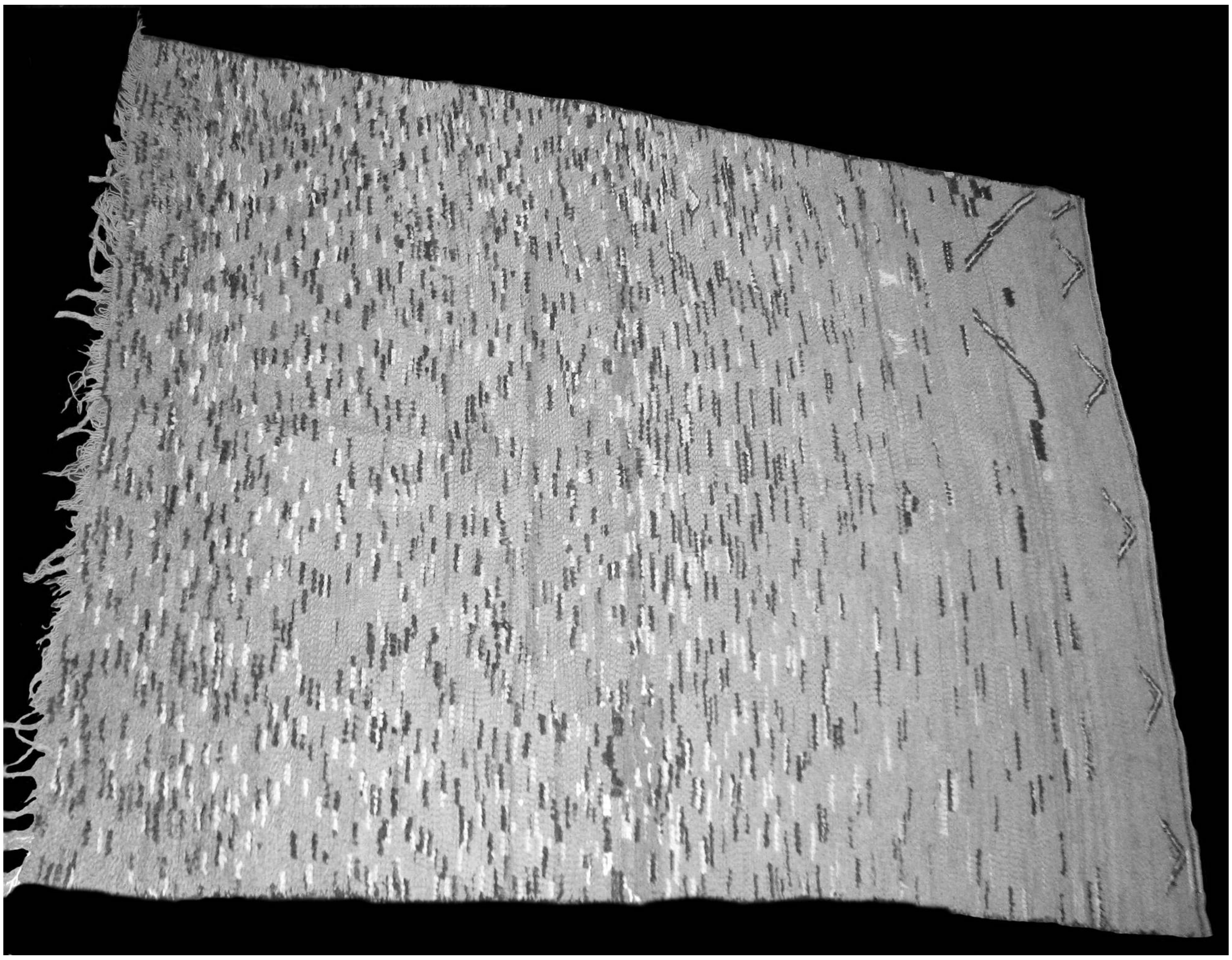

Figure 4. Collector's asymmetrical textile from the Haouz area, near Marrakesh.

With regard to MRT collectors, Gell's definition of the enchantment of technology seems to be at work, but with an interesting twist: for these collectors, authentic, artistic, asymmetrical textiles must depart from any traditional canon of technically outstanding ability. In other words, they are captivated by the 'lack of technology' of these textiles. During my research one collector stated that 'traditional textiles tend to reproduce a symmetric canon without any creativity, this does not interest me at all; in contrast I look for those asymmetric pieces that get out of their own tradition, those which we call '*tapis fous*' (crazy carpets), because these are the truly artistic creations'.

It is worth noting that MRT collectors rarely describe their pieces as beautiful. Instead, they talk about them as 'powerful', 'successful', 'moving', 'artistic', 'wild', and 'crazy'. These categories are based on visual considerations where asymmetry is the most valued factor – a 'mind trap' in Gell's parlance – to the extent that collectors tend to reject and ignore symmetrical compositions as either traditional or inauthentically 'new' creations, considering them respectively either boring or the result of tourist production. At this point, my contention is twofold. First, MRT collectors use the notion of asymmetry as art in their collections, exhibitions, and art catalogues. Second, this representation of asymmetry as a mark of the weaver's artistic expression represents collectors' personal projections rather than a reflection of local values.

But to project personal interpretations onto objects is part of a model of thinking, understanding, and seeking meaning that is characteristic of Western interpretations of material culture. William Somerset Maugham's novel *Of Human Bondage* explores this idea. The novel's central character, Philip Carey, is told that the meaning of life cannot be communicated openly. It is, instead, like his Oriental rug, which, with its intricate and complex designs, displays a mystery that can only be discerned by those who actively and systematically seek to decipher it. He carefully examines his carpet, searching for encrypted messages in the motifs. Eventually, he realises that what the carpet displays is in reality all the details of one's life, woven into a meaningful pattern:

> As the weaver elaborated his pattern … so might a man live his life, or if one was forced to believe that his actions were outside his choosing, so might a man look at his life … Out of the manifold events of

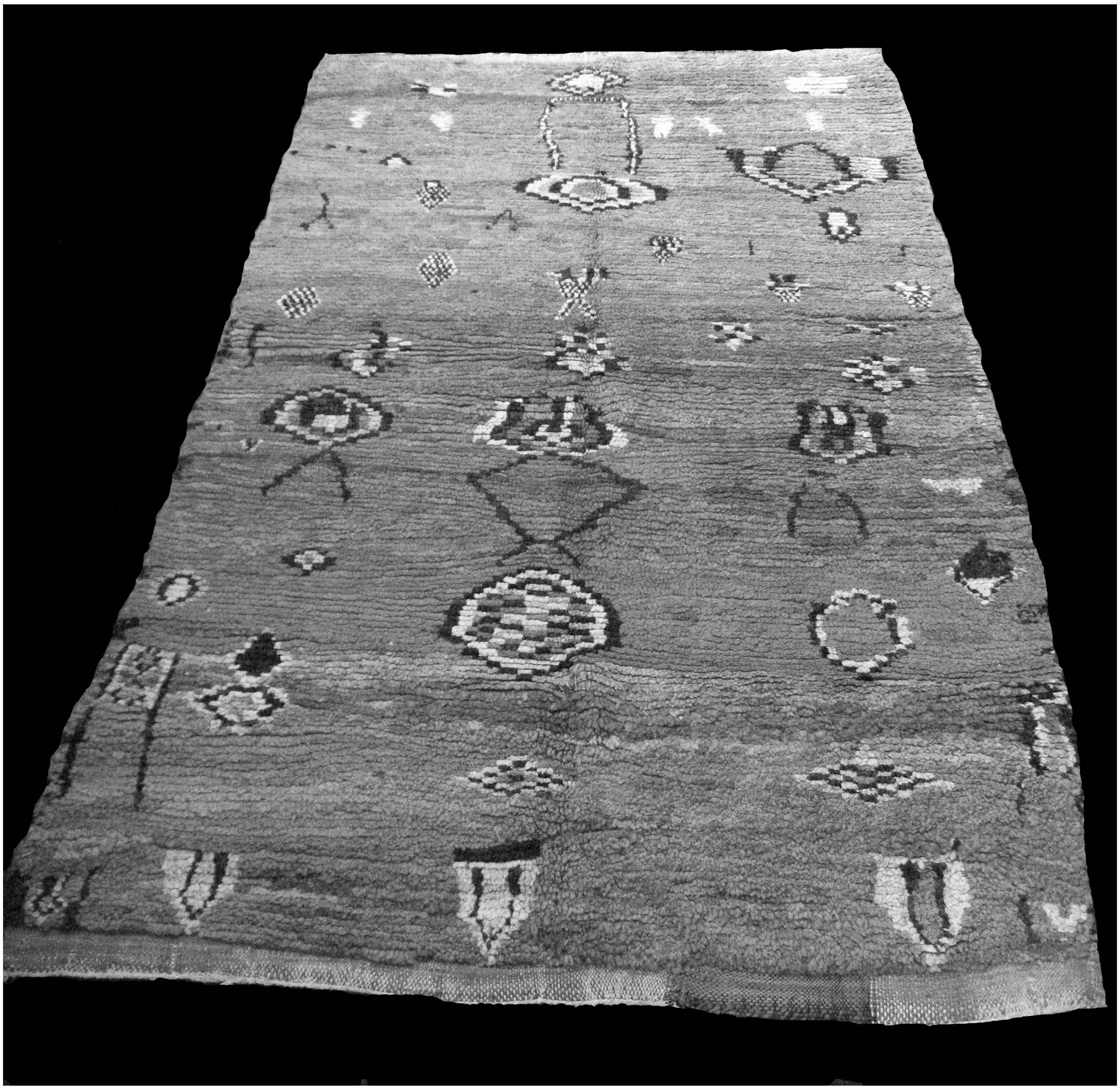

Figure 5. Collector's asymmetrical textile from the High Atlas Mountains.

> his life, his deeds, his feelings, his thoughts, he might make a design, regular, elaborate, complicated, or beautiful.[15]

As reflected in Maugham's novel, there is a general idea implicit in much Western thought about rural textile production that posits that weavers use motifs or patterns to express their moods, feelings and thoughts. For example, Ruth Barnes and Traude Gavin noted that most Western collectors of Borneo textiles are inclined to search for expressive forms, which they think are concealed in the abstract composition of the textiles. This, Barnes and Gavin explain, is due to a predominant Western approach that focuses on object perception. In contrast, Indonesian local weavers see motifs or patterns, as they are trained for pattern perception.[16]

A similar approach can be identified amongst European and North American MRT collectors, who when confronted with unfamiliar patterns try to work out a meaningful, recognisable form. But assigning a fanciful meaning to every motif can lead to misleading results. Many MRT collectors informed me that when they questioned Moroccan weavers about the meaning of motifs, the weaver's answers related to the names of the motifs, not to their meanings. Collectors explained this situation as a consequence of the weavers' lack of 'ancestral knowledge', a posited circumstance that

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[15] William Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage* (London: George H. Doran, 1915), chapter CVI.

[16] Ruth Barnes and Traude Gavin, 'Iban Prestige Textiles and the Trade in Indian Cloth: Inspiration and Perception', *Textile History*, 30/1 (1999), pp. 90–93.

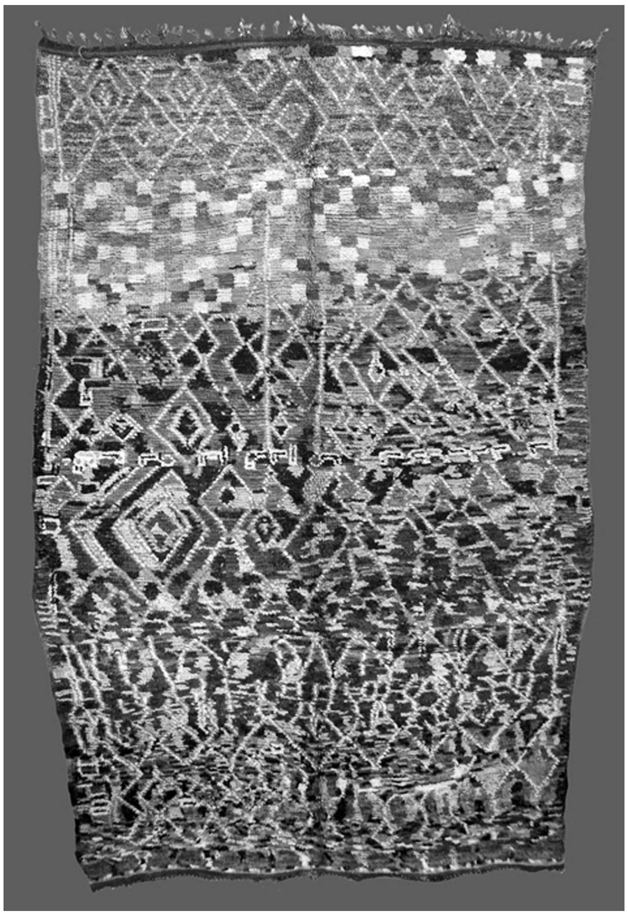

Figure 6. Collector's asymmetrical textile from the Middle Atlas Mountains.

has allowed collectors to advance their own conclusions.[17] But in the context of Moroccan rural textiles, as well as a Western focus on object perception we have also to account for the secrecy of weaving coupled with its nonverbal character (see conclusion). These circumstances do not make local concepts, values and meanings easily accessible.

On the one hand, it is perfectly legitimate to collect and admire asymmetrical textiles and to interpret one's own collection privately in an artistic and personal way. Many collectors are open about their love, fascination for and even obsession with their asymmetrical pieces, which they display in museums and art galleries. Certainly, some textiles have a dynamic attractiveness; their abstract character is highly valued by modern art connoisseurs, and asymmetrical pieces can reach high prices in the art market. On the other hand, however, it is important to remember that 'captivation' is highly personal, and that the explanations provided by MRT collectors to explain an alleged meaning are often based on their own personal interpretations. The difficulty arises when these interpretations are taken as unequivocal expertise in the field of Moroccan rural textiles.

What this paper proposes is an understanding of MRT formed through an exploration of local perspectives. With this in mind two sets of constituents are presented in the following study: namely, the rural societies that use MRT, and the group of weavers who produce these textiles.

Rural Society[18]

In order to contextualise the role of textiles in rural society a brief historical account is necessary. This will introduce the pre-colonial period, followed by a summary of the post-colonial context.

Prior to the time of the French and Spanish Protectorate in Morocco (1912–1956) we know of numerous instances that would suggest that, in the rural context, woven textiles were considered to be an extension of their owner. The scope of this paper does not allow detailed investigation of this phenomenon; it will suffice to mention briefly here some instances which illustrate the role of textiles in rural society and show them as an essential element in forging, reinforcing, or breaking social, political, and religious ties.[19]

Women's and men's capes alike were tied to an object belonging to a holy man or to the door ring of his shrine in order to ask for favours, and were left in the shrine as votive offerings.[20] The way to show respect to a holy man was to sweep his floor with one's cape, while praying to God to sweep away one's enemies.[21] The cloak was also used to sweep a shrine to obtain the blessing (*baraka*) of the holy person buried there. When the head or leader of the council of elders (*jama'a*) was elected he appointed several representatives, who were required to deposit their finely woven white capes with the leader. If they failed in their duties, their wives were forced to dye the capes yellow and exhibit them outside their tents as a sign of shame.[22] The guarantor of a promise would give his turban or his cape as security, so that if a person ran away the leader of the community could induce him to return by sending him his cape.[23] Similarly, the leaders of different villages made alliances by exchanging their turbans or capes. If any of them breached the promise the textile would be blackened and exhibited at the weekly market hung on a cane.[24] Ordinary men also made pacts or alliances amongst themselves using textiles as bonds: they would meet at a shrine or face the Qur'an in the presence of either their leader or a religious authority, who would unite the hands of the two parties and throw his cloak over them to seal the pact.[25]

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[17] This situation is not particular to Morocco: many textile connoisseurs all around the world have tended to read motifs as vocabularies, using their own personal interpretations. Jane Schneider, 'The Anthropology of Cloth', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 16 (1987), p. 414.

[18] The following sections are a brief account of my fieldwork, undertaken during 2001 to 2003, in several villages of the Central Middle Atlas of Morocco. The villages and the weavers involved will remain anonymous. The Central Middle Atlas cannot be taken as a full representative of the entirety of rural Moroccan textile culture; however, the aspects of symmetry discussed in this paper have been studied and observed in other weaving groups from the Moroccan rural context.

[19] The examples included here were documented by colonial researchers. However, during my fieldwork, elder members of the community remembered and confirmed these instances.

[20] Edward Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1926), pp. 533–534.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 558.

[22] Henri Bruno and Georges-Henri Bousquet, 'Contribution à l'étude des pactes de protection et d'alliance chez les Berbères du Maroc central', *Hespéris* (1946), p. 360; Henri Bruno, 'Note sur le statut coutumière des Berbères marocains', *Archives Berbères* (1915), p. 136; Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief*, p. 564.

[23] Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief*, p. 560.

When foreigners and/or trading caravans crossed a specific territory they had to pay the local leader for his protection. The payment was public: either a negotiated sum or a standard ten lengths of cloth.[26] Then the leader would exchange either turbans or a small woven panel from his tent with the outsider. In this way, it was publicly acknowledged that the foreigner was under the leader's protection.[27]

Examples of domestic ceremonies connected with textiles also took place: during childbirth, the husband would take a piece of his wife's clothing and attach it to a high place in the mosque so that everyone passing it could say a prayer for her.[28] A husband was expected to offer his wife a very fine cape woven by a master weaver after the arrival of their first child. When a husband misbehaved and his wife complained to the council of the elders, he was forced to give her a cape and a scarf as compensation. In the case of adultery, the offended husband had to present his case in front of the *jama'a* by bringing an item of clothing from the alleged adulterer, such as his cape or turban.[29]

In this period, most rural inhabitants were actively transhumant: they lived in woven tents and carried them to each location in a manner referred to as the use of 'portable architecture'.[30] Up to twenty smaller panels were decorated with various motifs and placed inside the tent as an internal structure. A tent acted as the community's mosque, as well as the meeting place for the council of the elders, the school, and also a space of hospitality for foreign guests.[31] Besides clothing, households used textiles for bedding, floor-coverings, cushion-covers, and storage bags; their possessions were stacked up in piles ready to be packed and moved easily.

With the changes brought about during the colonial period, textiles and their associated customs – including the uses of textiles described above – were progressively discontinued. By the 1930s year-round transhumance was in sharp decline and families began to settle in fixed locations, building single-floor stone houses.[32] The use and production of locally woven clothing declined with the introduction of imported machine-made cotton.[33] With time, men and women adopted cotton clothes with Western tailored styles for everyday dress. For ceremonial or festive clothing women adopted Moroccan urban styles, such as a variation of the Ottoman caftan, and men the urban hooded robe with long sleeves (*jallaba*).[34]

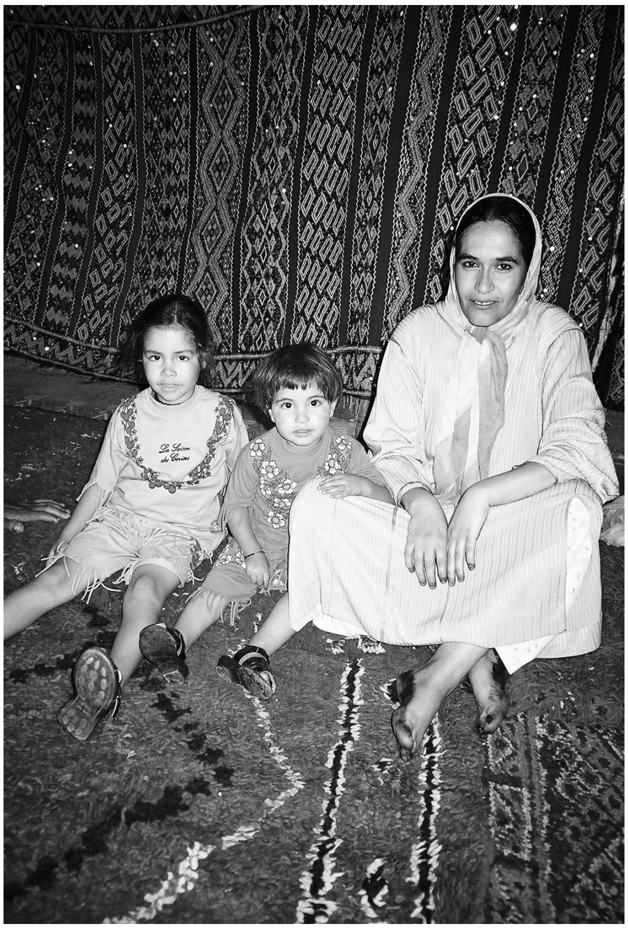

Figure 7. Home furnishings, Middle Atlas.

Although hand-woven clothing – along with the weaving and use of tents as everyday dwellings – has almost vanished in contemporary rural Morocco, various hand-woven textiles are still produced, mostly to be used as home furnishings (fig. 7). Rural weavers make both flat-weaves and knotted-weaves. Neither type of textile is limited to a single function; instead, they have a variety of uses such as bedding, blankets, storage-bags, cushions, wall hangings, floor coverings, and animal trappings. Textiles are stored in the weaving pile, which is regarded as a family's most precious possession (figs 8 and 9). It represents a form of tangible wealth and is located in a visible place.

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 566.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Ken Brown, 'The Curse of Westermarck', *Ethnos*, 3–4 (1982), p. 211.

[27] Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief*, p. 558.

[28] Georges Marcy, *Le droit coutumier Zemmour* (Paris: Larose, 1949), p. 130.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 106–145.

[30] Robert Kronenburg, *Portable Architecture, Transportable Environments: Theory, Context, Design, and Technology* (London: Spon, 1998).

[31] Laoust, 'L'habitation chez les transhumants I', pp. 230, 237.

[32] Emile Laoust, 'L'habitation chez les transhumants du Maroc central II. La maison', *Hespéris* (1935), pp. 115–218.

[33] Laoust, *Mots et choses berbères*, p. 129; Daniel J. Schroeter, *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 213; Amina Auchar, 'Pratiques vestimentaires et mutations sociales en Haute Moulouya', in Susan Ossman (ed.), *Miroirs maghrébins: Itinéraires de soi et paysages de recontre* (Paris: CRNS, 1998), p. 57.

[34] Auchar, 'Pratiques vestimentaires', p. 68.

Today, prestigious hand-woven textiles are still an essential part of the elaborate gift exchange that takes place during weddings. No matter how poor a family is, it will mobilise all possible resources to produce an adequate trousseau for the bride as well as to decorate the space designated for the ceremonies. By displaying these textiles a family exhibits its prestige and honour. Failing to do so would result in a shameful situation. During the festivities the families of the groom and the bride compete to host the best celebration as judged by the villagers, who will consider the number of guests, the music offered, and also the quality of the textile decoration. The amount and quality of textiles displayed reflects the prestige of the women of the household and their capacity to mobilise weaving networks – family, friends, and neighbours. Such displays are true 'tournaments of value' where textiles are scrutinised, judged, and valued by the villagers (fig. 10).[35]

Textiles merit display only when they show perfect and complex symmetrical compositions. Master weavers make sure that when textiles do not comply with this requirement – even if they seem symmetric at first glance but are not totally so – they will not be displayed in any celebration. Additionally, wedding guests observe and judge the quality of the textiles that make up the bride's wealth and the trousseau displayed at the bride's celebration (fig. 11). The trousseau consists of several dozen textiles. These become the bride's personal property, to be passed on to her daughters as an heirloom.[36] These prestigious objects are highly valued by the weavers and their families; they will only be sold in desperate financial circumstances.

Thus far we have seen how prestigious local hand-made textiles have been indispensable components of rural life, providing tangible evidence of status that helps to sustain local values. In present-day rural Morocco textiles not only continue to embody social life (albeit in smaller quantities than in the past); they exemplify social life.

These ceremonial textiles are considered prestigious by rural society, including the non-weaver villagers – mostly the male members of the community, who openly talk about how complicated it is to understand the intricate weaving techniques, and the complex symmetry that results from these. It can be argued that this is so because untrained observers who are not familiar with the process of weaving motifs cannot fix their eyes exclusively on a specific part; instead, their gaze tends to wander all over the surface. To follow the sequence of motifs and to check whether perfect symmetry has been achieved becomes a challenge. For these villagers the result is simply dazzling, captivating. Gell's theory of enchantment strongly resonates in this rural context. Hence, his notion can help us to understand how the captivation experienced by the non-weaving locals gives prestige and high status to highly skilled master weavers.[37]

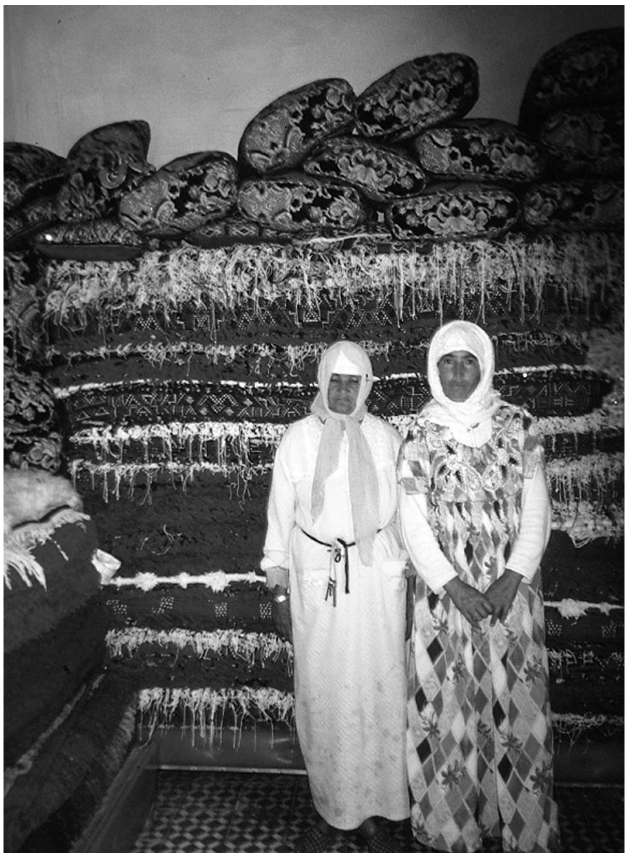

Figure 8. Weaving piles, Middle Atlas.

Rural Weavers[38]

We have seen how textiles create and maintain social relationships through usage and visual appreciation.

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[35] For a description of this concept see Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3–63.

[36] In the past, corpses were wrapped with a finely woven cape. Nowadays a cotton sheet is used. If the deceased is a woman, her corpse is covered by one of her textiles on the way to the cemetery. Once she has been buried the textile may be donated to the mosque, where it can be used as a prayer rug.

[37] Cheap Chinese and Indian textiles, as well as second-hand Western textiles, are replacing Moroccan weavings. Despite these changes and the rampant poverty of the rural context, master weavers continue with the weaving process, even if they have to use plastic and recycled materials. In addition, only those master weavers who achieve mastery of complex symmetry are considered high-value members of society; those weavers who do not reach that level are called lazy and often ridiculed in songs and poems. See Miriam Ali-de-Unzaga 'On the Importance of Being a Weaver: Why Weavers still Weave?', in G. Blazeck (ed.), *Post Punk Pink* (exhibition catalogue; Graz, 2010), pp. 6–13.

[38] While discussing my findings, a collector and dealer of textiles said that I could not possibly speak for all the rural weavers of Morocco. This is not something I claim to do. My fieldwork conducted in 2001–2003 focused mainly on the weaving process of the rural Middle Atlas, where I became a weaver apprentice. However, during 2003 and 2004 I also spent time studying and observing other weaving regions in Morocco, where I contrasted data with many different master weavers as well as with 'non-prestigious' weavers. I am confident that my findings reflect the view of master weavers; however I cannot claim that it also reflects the views of all the weavers who have not reached the status of master weavers.

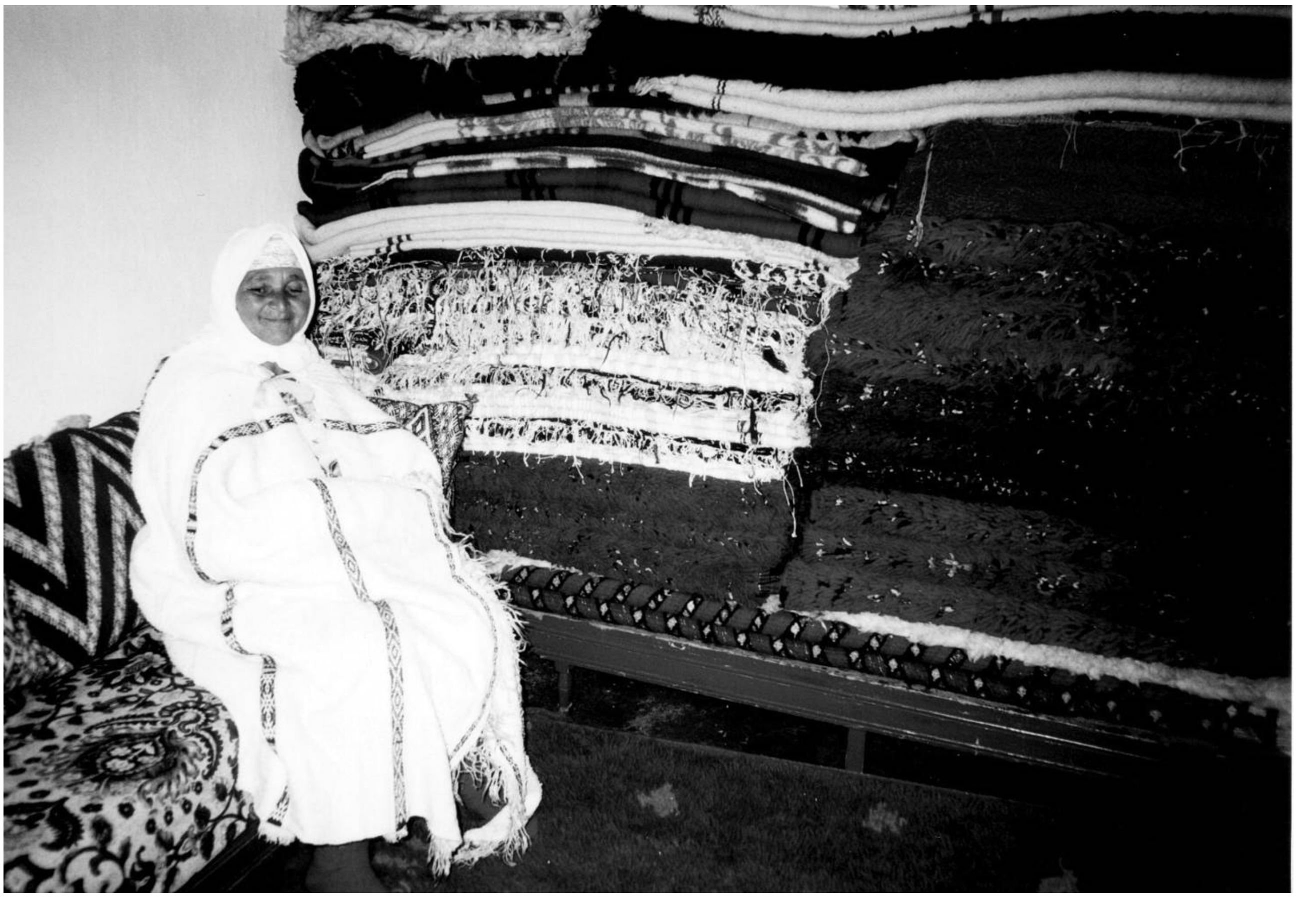

Figure 9. Weaving piles, Middle Atlas.

But looking at finished textiles provides only one part of the story, a story that should be complemented by the examination of how these textiles are made. In the village, the numerous tasks required to produce a finished textile are female-only activities that actively exclude men (figs 12–16). Throughout this paper these tasks will be referred to as 'operational sequences', a term coined by André Leroi-Gourhan to classify the series of operations involved in the transformation of matter.[39] All of the operational sequences of the weaving process are part of a single practice, which does not have a marked beginning or an end (fig. 17).

After the textile is taken off the loom, the whole sequence is set in motion to create another textile. Hence, the operational sequences form part of an ongoing process, one which does not necessarily stop at any specific month or season except for certain times during the week and during some specific religious celebrations. Each operational sequence requires specific knowledge and it is not necessary for each single weaver to be an expert in all of them. Full mastery, however, is a necessary prerequisite to becoming a master weaver.

Weaving is an exclusively female activity, and while the majority of women are weavers, there are several levels of expertise among them. There are those who simply weave – that is, they weave plain textiles – and those who weave motifs. While motif-weavers are respected by the whole community and categorised as energetic women, simple or plain weavers do not gain the same respect. At the top of the weavers' hierarchy are the master weavers, who have several years of weaving experience. They have mastered every step of the weaving process, and are able to memorise numerous complex motifs. They dedicate most of their time to weaving, and often take on the responsibility of teaching those who do not have the opportunity to learn from their own mothers.

Although the term 'master weaver' (*ma'allema*) is an unofficial denomination, it is used to describe a woman who has achieved prestige through her weaving knowledge, with which she gains high status and the respect of her community. The status of *ma'allema* is achieved when a woman is not only able to reproduce several dozen motifs with great dexterity, but also when she can create new motifs and has the ability to combine them into complex patterns, producing a unique piece with each composition. A *ma'allema* is also able to 'deconstruct' each motif just by looking at it, and to reproduce its structure on the loom. Dexterity and virtuosity are valued highly in the village, to the extent that when a *ma'allema* weaves complex motifs, other women often come to her house to watch her at work.

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[39] André Leroi-Gourhan, *Le geste et la parole* (Paris: Albin Michelle, 1964), p. 164.

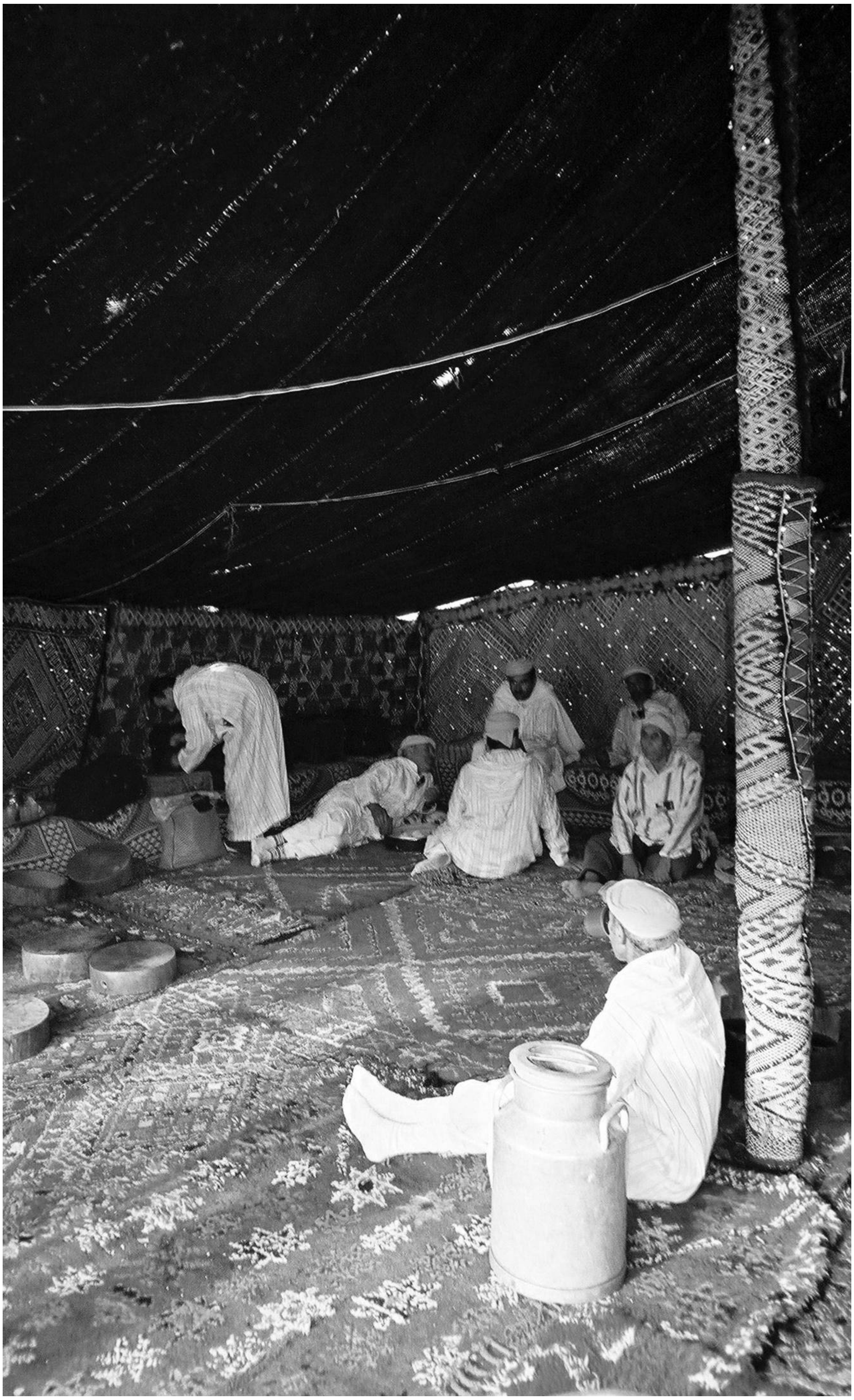

Figure 10. Wedding guests admiring the bride's textiles in the wedding tent, Middle Atlas.

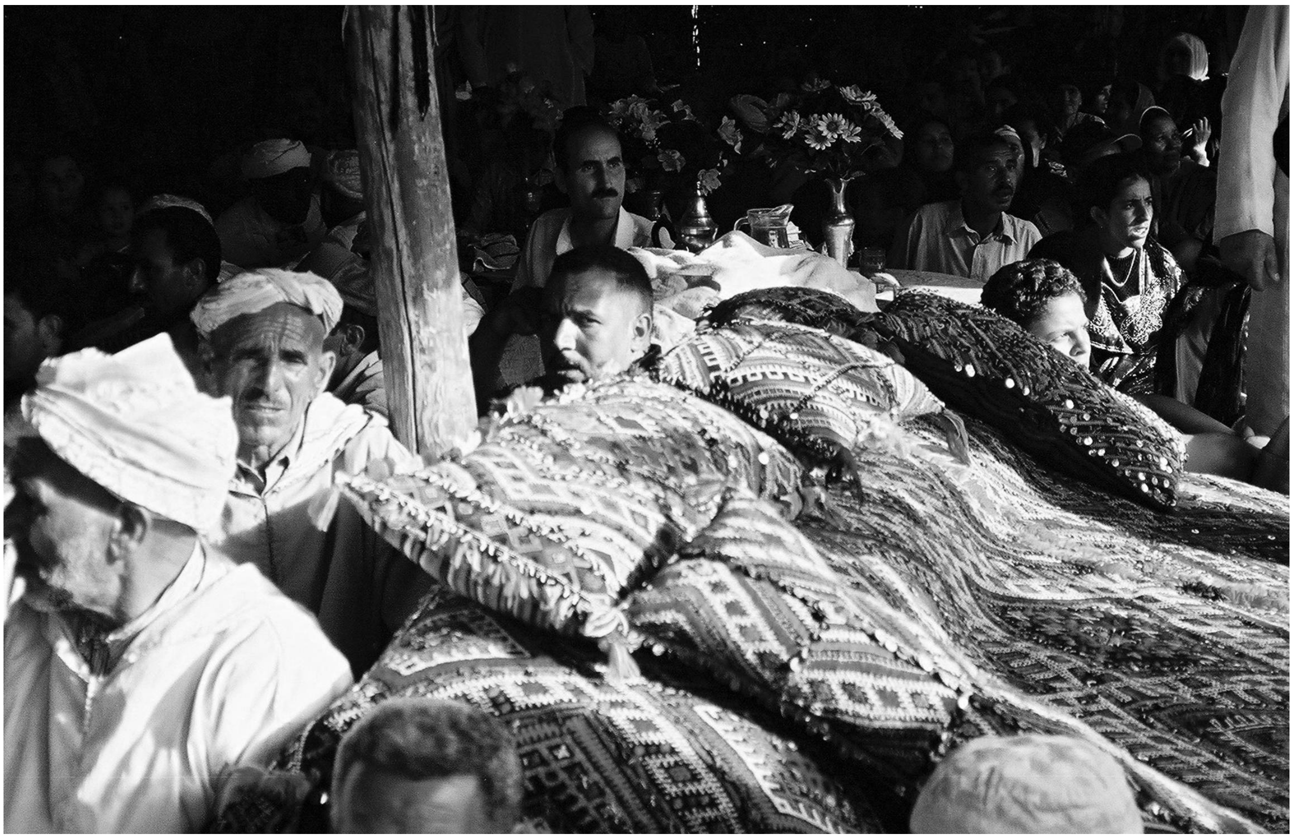

Figure 11. Wedding ceremonies displaying the bride's trousseau, Middle Atlas.

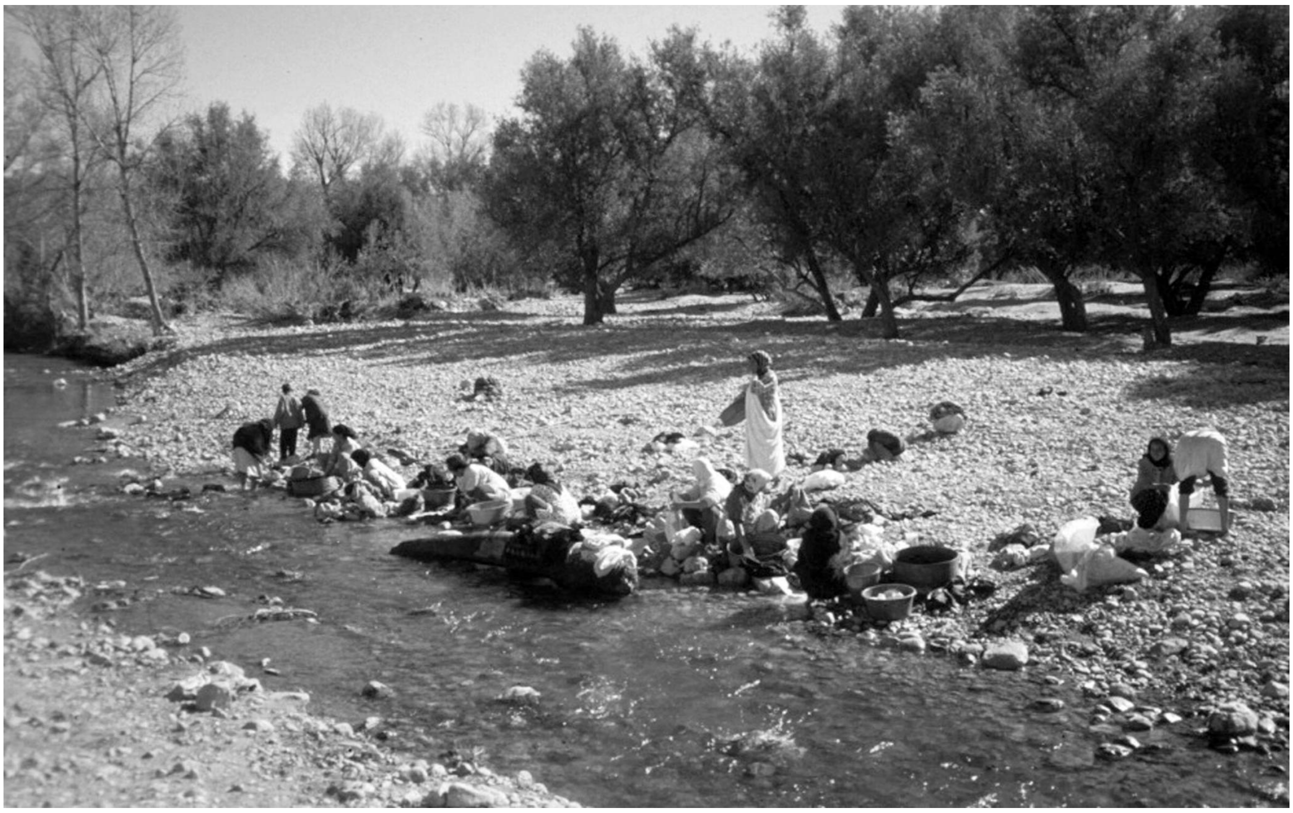

Figure 12. Steps in the weaving process, Middle Atlas: washing the wool.

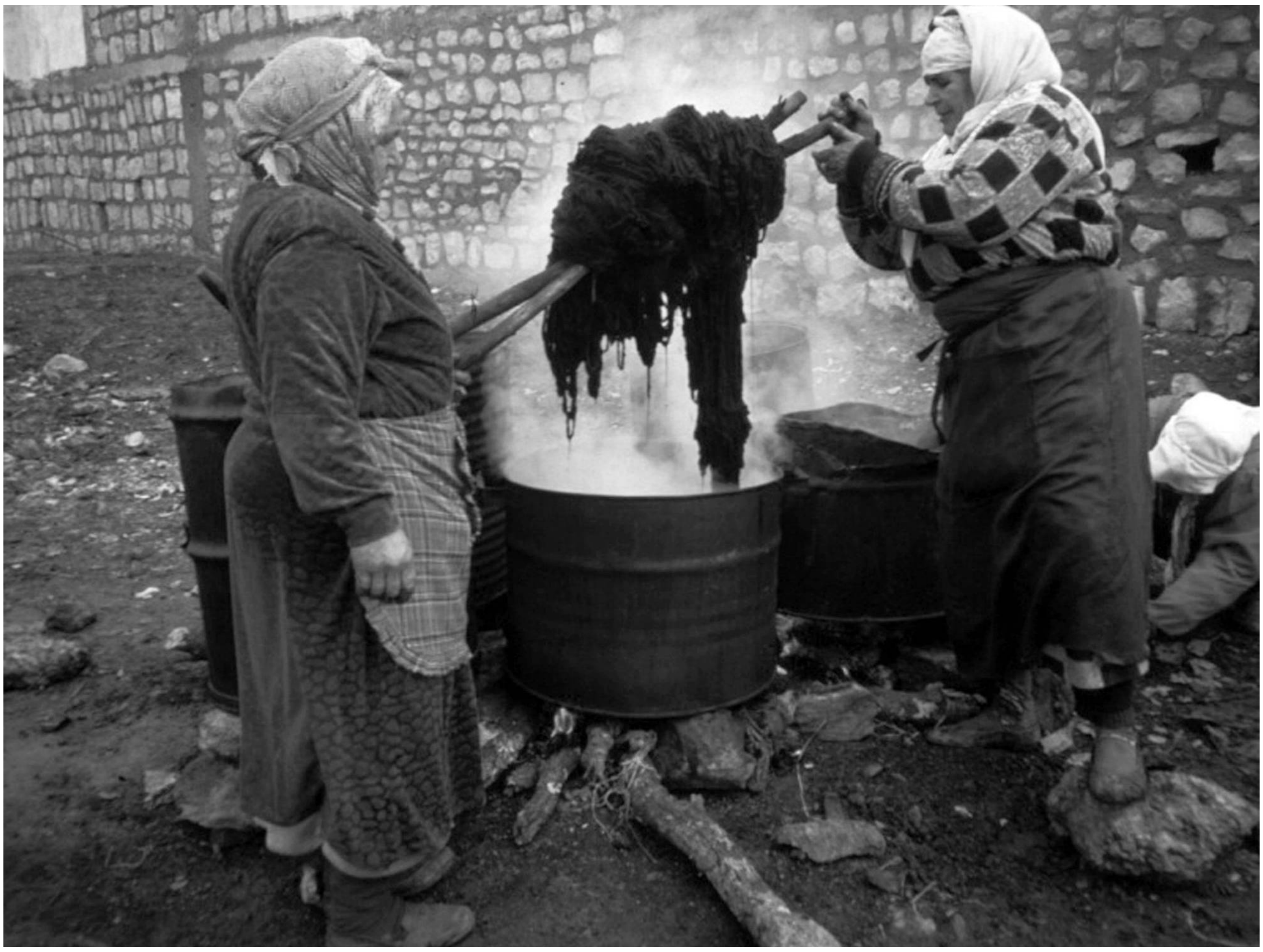

Figure 13. Steps in the weaving process, Middle Atlas: dyeing the wool.

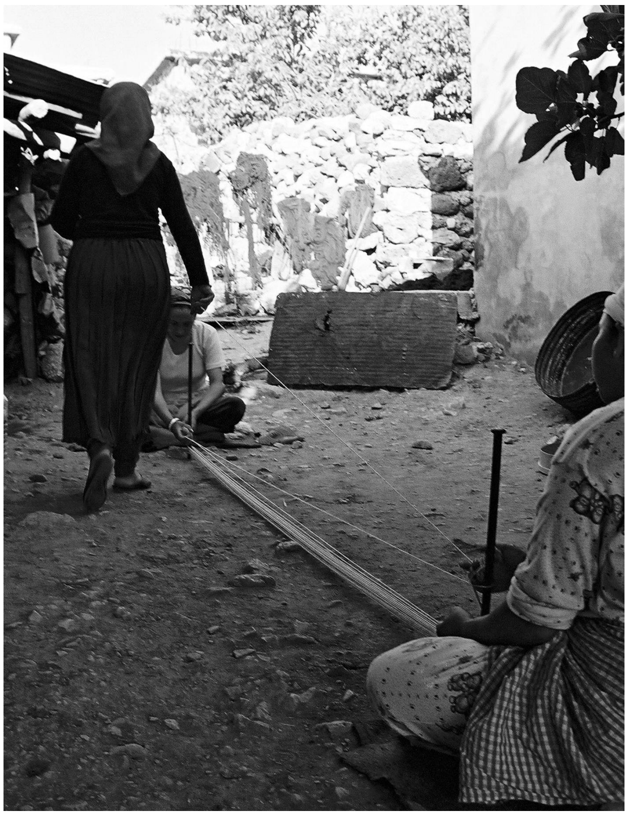

Figure 14. Steps in the weaving process, Middle Atlas: warping to create the weaving structure.

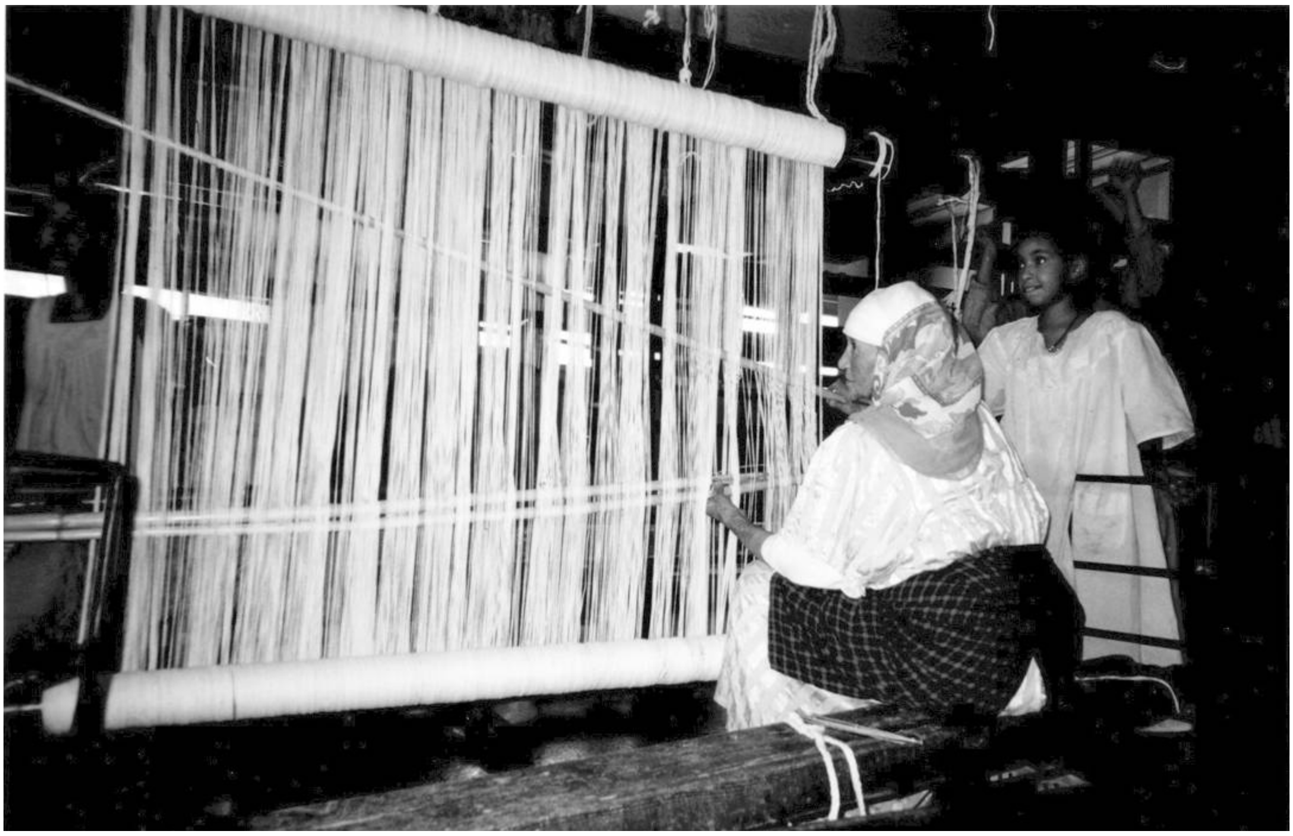

Figure 15. Steps in the weaving process, Middle Atlas: preparing the weaving structure.

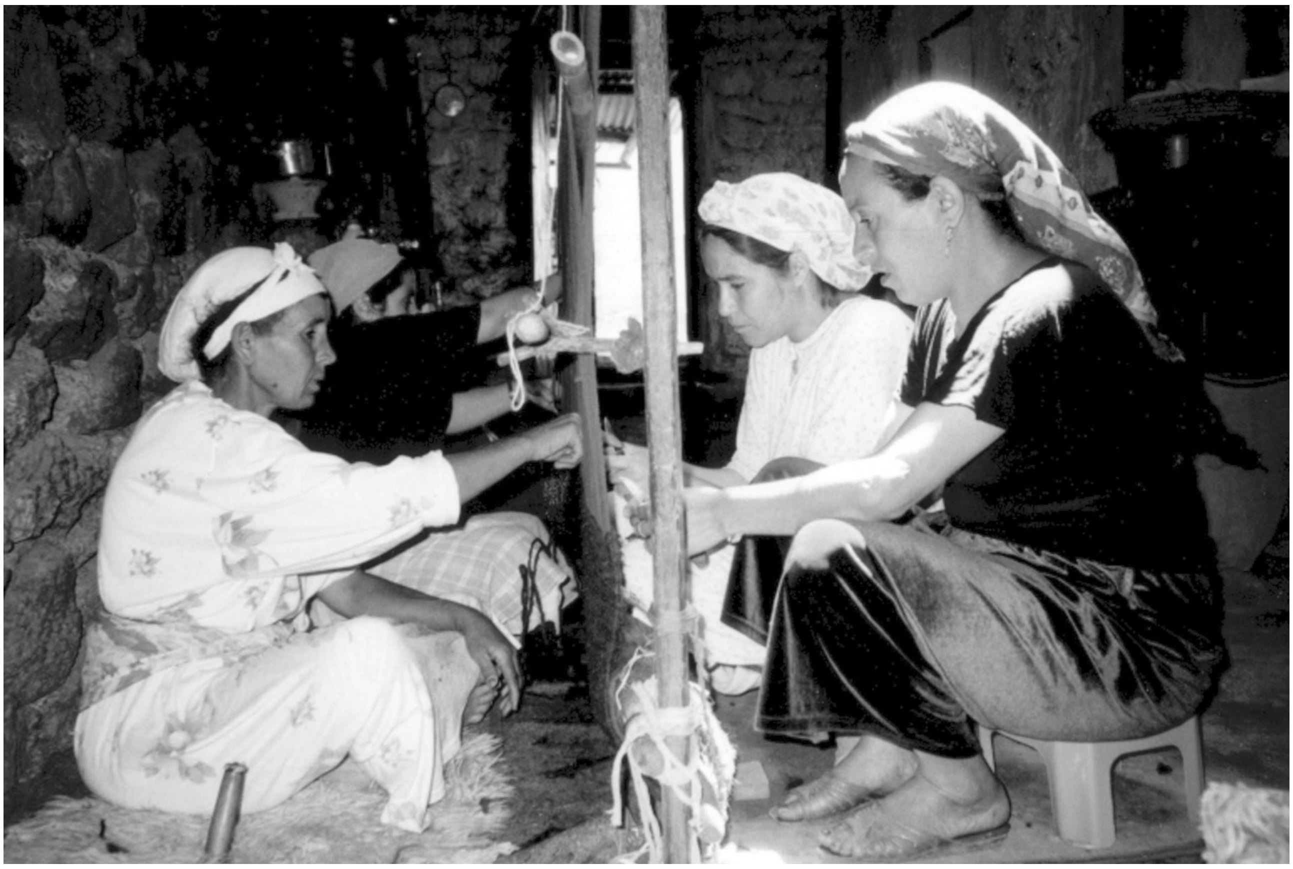

Figure 16. Steps in the weaving process, Middle Atlas: weaving.

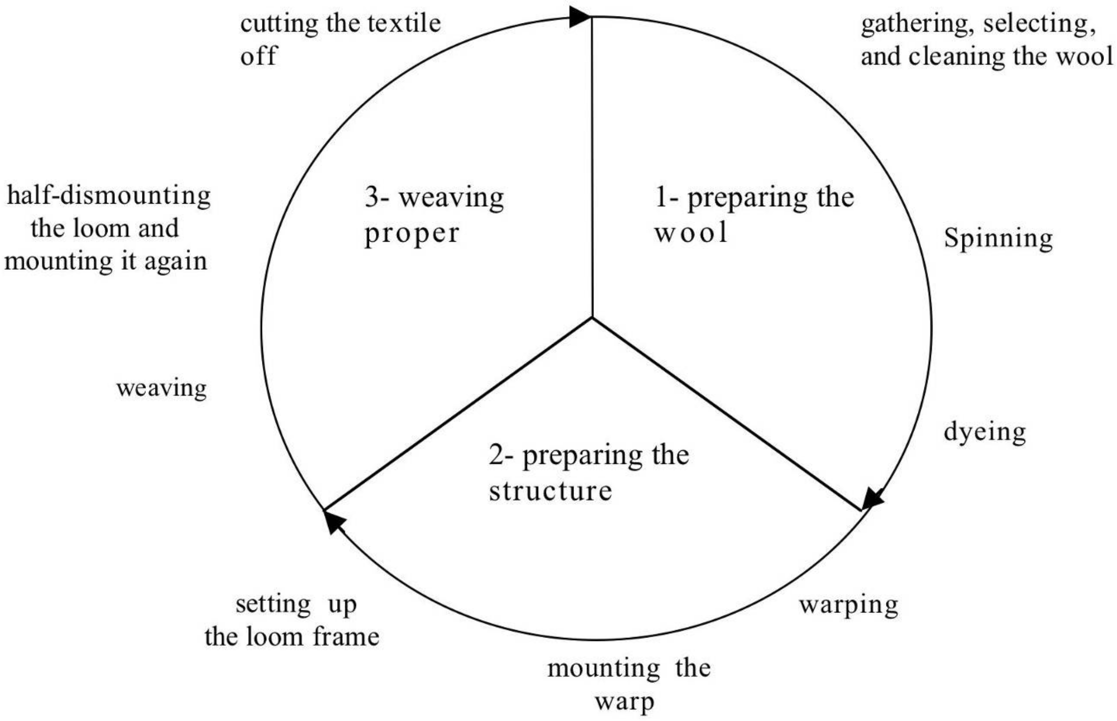
cutting the textile off
gathering, selecting, and cleaning the wool
3- weaving proper
1- preparing the wool
half-dismounting the loom and mounting it again
Spinning
weaving
dyeing
2- preparing the structure
setting up the loom frame
warping
mounting the warp

Figure 17. The weaving process.

Figure 18. Master weavers with the author, Middle Atlas.

Locally, weaving skills inculcate the values of diligence and self-discipline. By learning how to make textiles one learns how to become a woman; by making complex motifs one learns to be a women of value. Only through apprenticeship in the company of a master can an apprentice aspire to belong to the circle of master weavers (fig. 18).

It is generally thought that motifs carry social meaning,[40] and many textile collectors worldwide tend to interpret motifs as being linked to the weaver's feelings, or to her personal representation of the world or her community. During my fieldwork I documented the adamant conclusion of master weavers from many different rural areas of Morocco about one thing: 'without motifs, textiles cannot be praised; and without symmetry, motifs are worthless'. But all my efforts failed to document instances in which weavers could regard motifs as a 'vocabulary' or 'grammar' capable of expressing abstract or concrete concepts.[41] I then learned that Moroccan rural weavers do not act in such ways. For these weavers, motifs are simply forms that they enjoy;[42] they are not employed to express ideas, thoughts, or feelings.[43]

Gell has argued against the notion of a language of art that has symbolic meaning. Instead, he proposed to 'view art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it'.[44] This is indeed the case with regard to Moroccan rural textiles. As we shall see, the meaning carried or the information embodied is not to be deciphered as if it were a code carrying hidden messages. Instead, the significance of woven motifs and the information they provide are linked to the complexity of their execution.

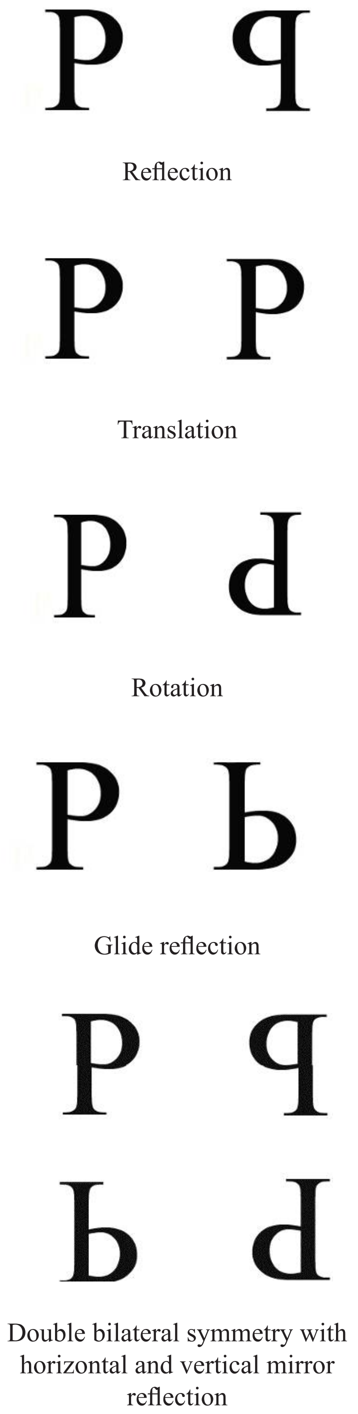
Reflection
Translation
Rotation
Glide reflection
Double bilateral symmetry with horizontal and vertical mirror reflection

Figure 19. Symmetrical motions: reflection, translation, rotation, and glide reflection. After http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/basic.html.

The motifs used in rural Moroccan weaving are predominantly made up of straight lines rather than curves. Regardless of the background colour, motifs are made with contrasting colours. The triangle and the lozenge are the most common forms. Generally, motifs could be defined as basic repeated units, but what constitutes the smallest possible unit for an external observer is not necessarily the basic unit as understood by the weaver. The apprentice learns that motifs consist of lines, each

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[40] Pierre Lemonnier, *Elements for an Anthropology of Technology* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1992), p. 51.

[41] See Susan Searight, *The Use and Function of Tattooing on Moroccan Women*, 3 vols (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1984). Using a sample of one thousand women she writes:

> … fertility is a preoccupation for women, the difficulty comes from deciding which symbol represents fertility, and how it is represented in a tattoo. It has been suggested that fertility could be represented by a palm tree, however, when it comes to decide which symbol is the palm tree one is back to personal appreciation' (*ibid.*, p. 227).

More importantly, Searight found that the fact of being tattooed was more important for women than the motif employed (*ibid*., p. 31).

[42] However, in their interaction with Westerners and local dealers, many weavers now include stories in their pieces: this practice is quite common in highly visited tourist areas such as Marrakesh and its surroundings.

[43] This aspect has been discussed by textile researchers studying other parts of the world, and they have also rejected the reading of symbolic messages into rural textiles. Cf. Schneider, 'Anthropology of Cloth', p. 415; Elisha P. Renne, *Cloth that Does Not Die: The Meaning of Cloth in Bùnú Social Life* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); Traude Gavin, *Women's Warpath: Iban Ritual Fabrics from Borneo* (UCLA: Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1996), p. 11; Barnes and Gavin, 'Iban Prestige Textiles', p. 90; Lissant Bolton, 'What Makes Singo Different: North Vanuatu Textiles and the Theory of Captivation', in Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas (eds), *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2001), p. 102; Sarah Fee, *C'est l'habit qui fait la personne: Tissue et vie sociale en Androy, Madagascar* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Paris: INALCO, 2003), p. 139; and Webb Keane, 'Signs are not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things', in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 182–205.

[44] Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 6.

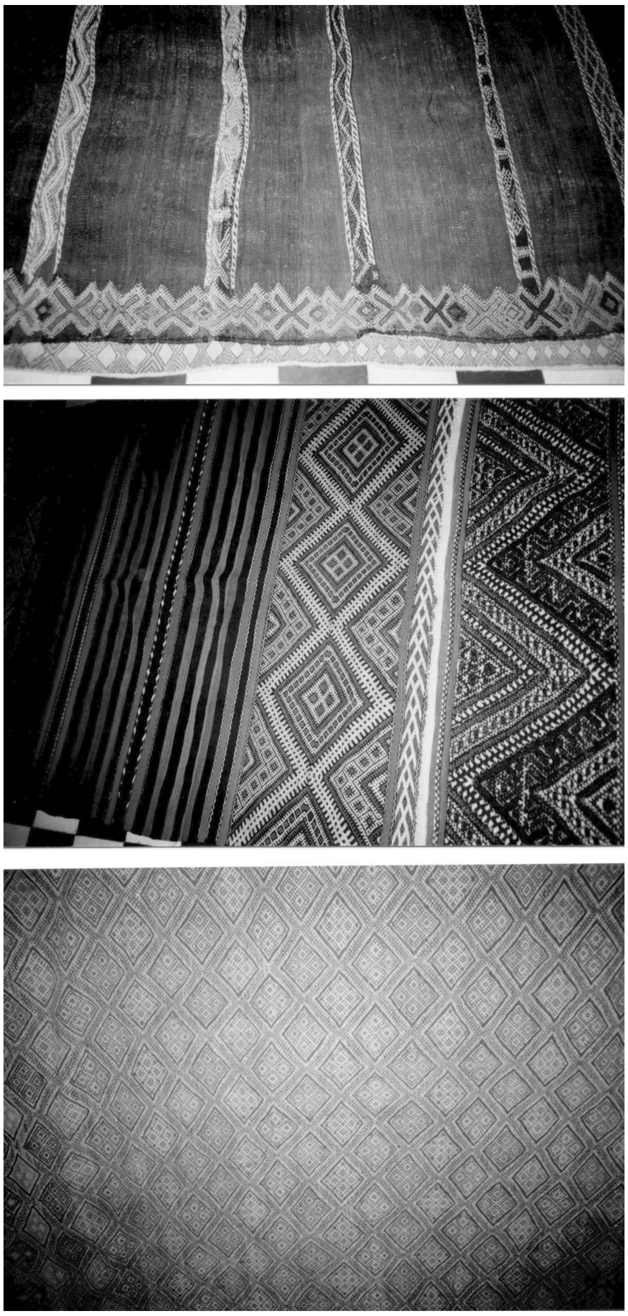

Figure 20. Variations in textile composition, various regions in Morocco.

line being given a numerical code to fix the motif in the mind. This technique not only helps the weaver to weave quickly and efficiently, it also relieves her from the burden of naming and remembering the names of numerous motifs. In order to weave motifs, a mathematical ability to count and memorise codes and measurements is necessary. The weaving of motifs requires a further mental skill: the capacity to conceptualise the complete piece before starting the weaving process. The main requisite for the production of balanced compositions is the inclusion of symmetric motifs. In the process of learning, numerous unsuccessful asymmetric attempts are inevitable before harmonious and symmetrical compositions can be created. Mistakes resulting in asymmetry and unbalanced compositions are only tolerated if made by a child or an apprentice. In the case of an experienced weaver, these mistakes would be regarded as a sign of bad craftsmanship.

The field of symmetry is non-lexical, but it can be measured mathematically with precision and accuracy through plane pattern symmetry analysis.[45] The principles of symmetry require an axis as a centre through which movements of the plane can form four symmetrical motions: reflection, translation, rotation, and glide reflection (fig. 19). For some scholars, symmetry is not just an ornamental element. It has been defined as a cross-cultural category, a basic tool for processing information that allows humans to discriminate shapes and to categorise similarities.[46]

For rural weavers, symmetry is a general guiding principle and the result of mental mathematical calculations, but above all it is a practical device: it facilitates memorisation and reproduction. In bilateral reflection symmetry, one half of the motif – or section – has all the necessary information required to complete the other half. Once a weaver knows how to produce one section, she can repeat this over the remaining parts to create the complete motif, and vice versa; weavers with the appropriate training can deconstruct complex motifs into simpler sections. For the purpose of clarification, rural Moroccan textile compositions can be classified as horizontal bands, vertical bands, 'V bands' and/or a combination of these (figs 20–24). Whatever the choice, master weavers aim to create an overall composition with perfect symmetry, which also implies that each individual band must display internal symmetry. The achievement of perfect symmetry – in the internal bands as well as in the overall composition – is considered the highest degree of virtuosity.

Textiles with diagonal bands making 'V' shapes and featuring diagonal translation motions are regarded as the highest rank in complex symmetrical variation (figs 25 and 26). In these compositions, the weaver needs highly elaborate mental and visual skills in order to memorise the formulae of several diagonal motifs that are woven simultaneously. For inexperienced apprentices, as well as for non-weavers, complex 'V' shapes are compositions that cannot be easily grasped visually. For untrained observers it becomes a challenge to follow the complex sequence of motifs and check for perfect symmetry: it is part of the captivation process. Thus, the more a weaver displays her mastery and virtuosity in complex, symmetrically perfect compositions, the more other weavers and non-weavers alike value her and her textiles.

Moreover, in the rural context we can find the belief that a correlation exists between the technical quality of the piece and the human quality of its maker; that is, between

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[46] Dorothy K. Washburn and Donald W. Crowe, *Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 24.

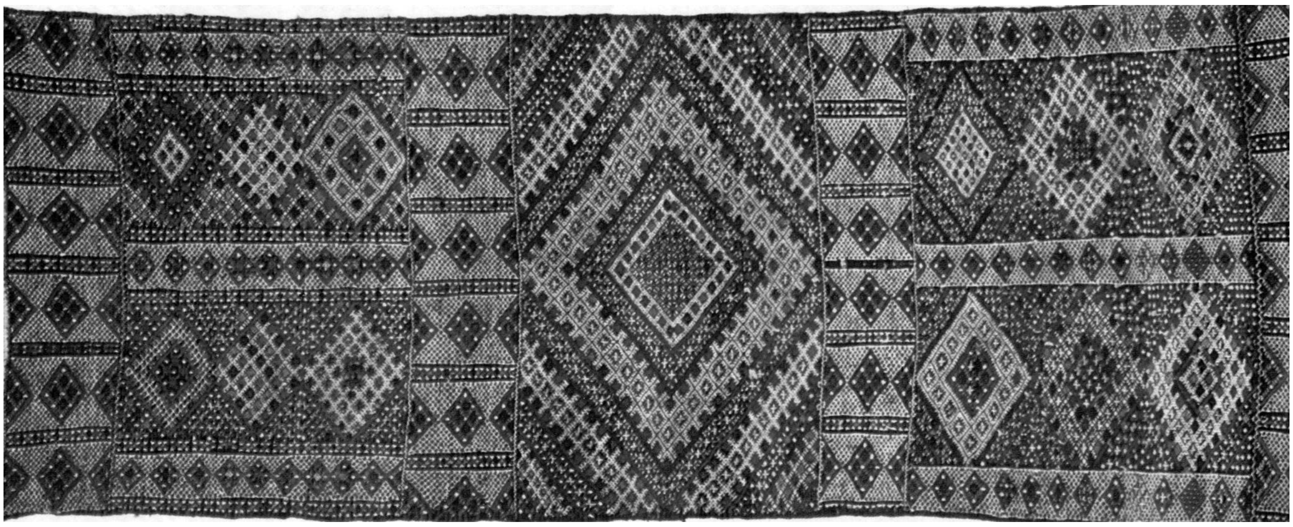

Figure 21. Variations in textile composition, various regions in Morocco.

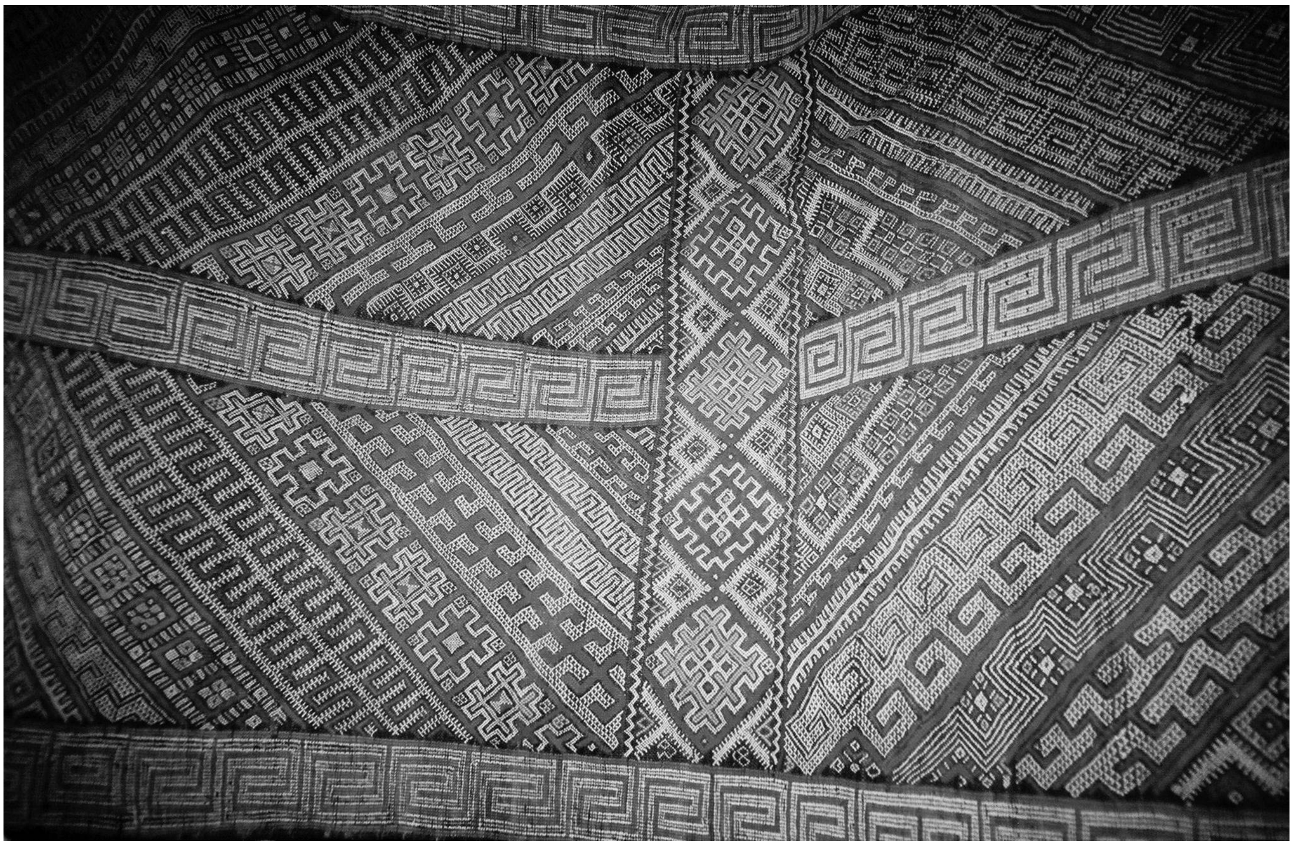

Figure 22. Variations in textile composition, various regions in Morocco.

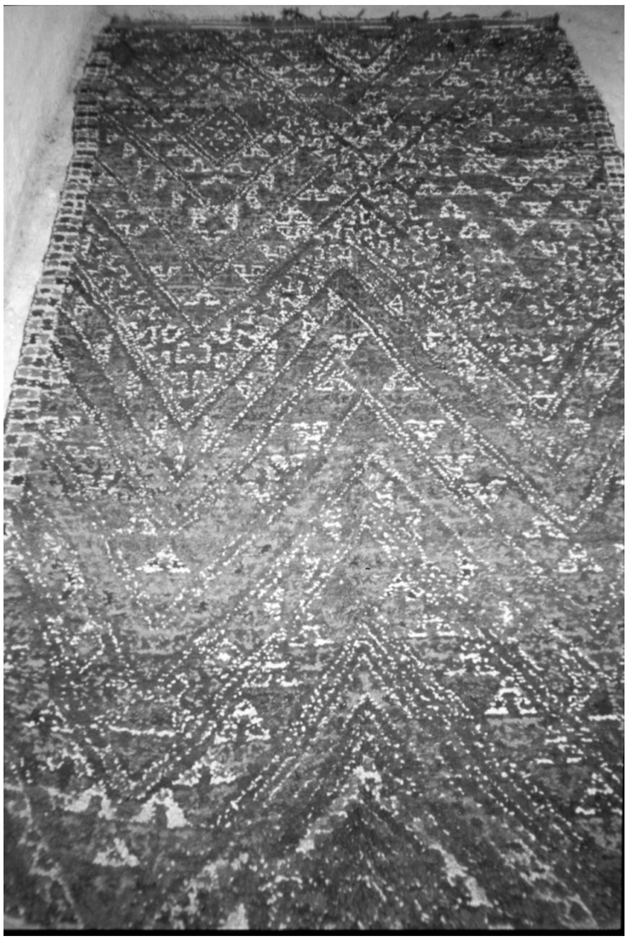

Figure 23. Variations in textile composition, various regions in Morocco.

technical virtuosity and human virtue. Hence, a harmonious visual effect reflects the balanced personality of a weaver. This is why intricate and carefully performed symmetry is regarded as highly valuable.

Textiles which at first glance seem to the untrained eye to be completely symmetrical are scrutinised by master weavers in order to check for asymmetrical anomalies. An asymmetric composition would never achieve the prestige weavers assign to symmetrical ones (fig. 27). Hence the prestige of the weaver also drops. As outlined earlier, asymmetric compositions are regarded as the work of children, apprentices, beginners, or careless weavers who have not yet mastered the technical skills required to produce symmetry, and therefore they are considered to be lacking a solid personality.

When the master weaver decides that an apprentice has acquired all the technical knowledge required, producing intricate symmetric motifs – in other words, when she demonstrates that she has the physical, mental, and moral abilities needed, and therefore the potential to become a master weaver – the apprentice is then able to acquire a set of non-technical knowledge. This is known to weavers as weaving lore (*qa'ida* in Arabic, *aztta* in Tamazight Berber) that includes the group of concepts, norms, and taboos linked to the process of weaving.[47] Once the weaving lore is fully controlled, women can achieve the rank of master weavers, and thus they are seen as intelligent, energetic, knowledgeable, virtuous and respected, and through this process they become high-ranking members of their community.

Concluding Remarks

From the weaving story of Penelope, wife of Ulysses, onwards it has become axiomatic to make use of textile and weaving metaphors to describe situations. Textiles evoke ideas of connectedness: interweaving, overlapping, tying, wrapping and enveloping textile metaphors are widely employed in several languages. Nowadays, scholars and laypersons alike talk about 'the fabric of society', 'things interwoven in complex webs', 'the warp and weft of existence', 'the interweaving threads of life', and so forth. This paper has endeavoured to show how these words are not mere metaphors to Moroccan rural weavers and their communities; they illustrate contexts where the value of weaving and the value of textiles bring about important aspects of what it is to be a highly valued person. In addition to the voices and attitudes of weavers and their societies, the views of MRT collectors have also been considered here.

Both MRT collectors and the non-weaving local community seem to have been captivated by the visual aspects of the textiles. This enchantment or captivation allows us to understand certain connections between textiles and people. But even more revealing is the unexpected connection which links collectors and weavers in a rather unusual way: both seem to be simultaneously enchanted and enchanters.

Let us now recall Gell's definition of enchantment or captivation, which he termed as 'the visual realisation of an unimaginable virtuosity: the effect created by being unable to comprehend the complexity of the design'.[48] On the one hand, we have seen that collectors are captivated by asymmetric textiles, which they consider powerful. In turn, by owning these textiles, talking about them, publishing their collections and exhibiting them in museums and art galleries, they somehow come to participate in this power by enchanting art-loving Western audiences. On the other hand, prestigious weavers who produce highly complex symmetrical compositions have enchanted/captivated their own society through the technology of complex perfect symmetry. In both cases, this captivation leads to the attribution of social prestige.

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[47] The word *qa'ida* comes from the root qaf–ayn-da, which can be translated as to sit down or to remain. *Qa'ida* has two sets of meanings: firstly, rule, principle, maxim, formula, method, manner, model, canon, pattern, precept, example to follow. Secondly, ground, base, foundation, support, foot, pedestal, chassis. To the best of my knowledge the term *qa'ida* is also used in rural Morocco for other highly regulated activities such as cooking and agricultural work.

[48] Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 61.

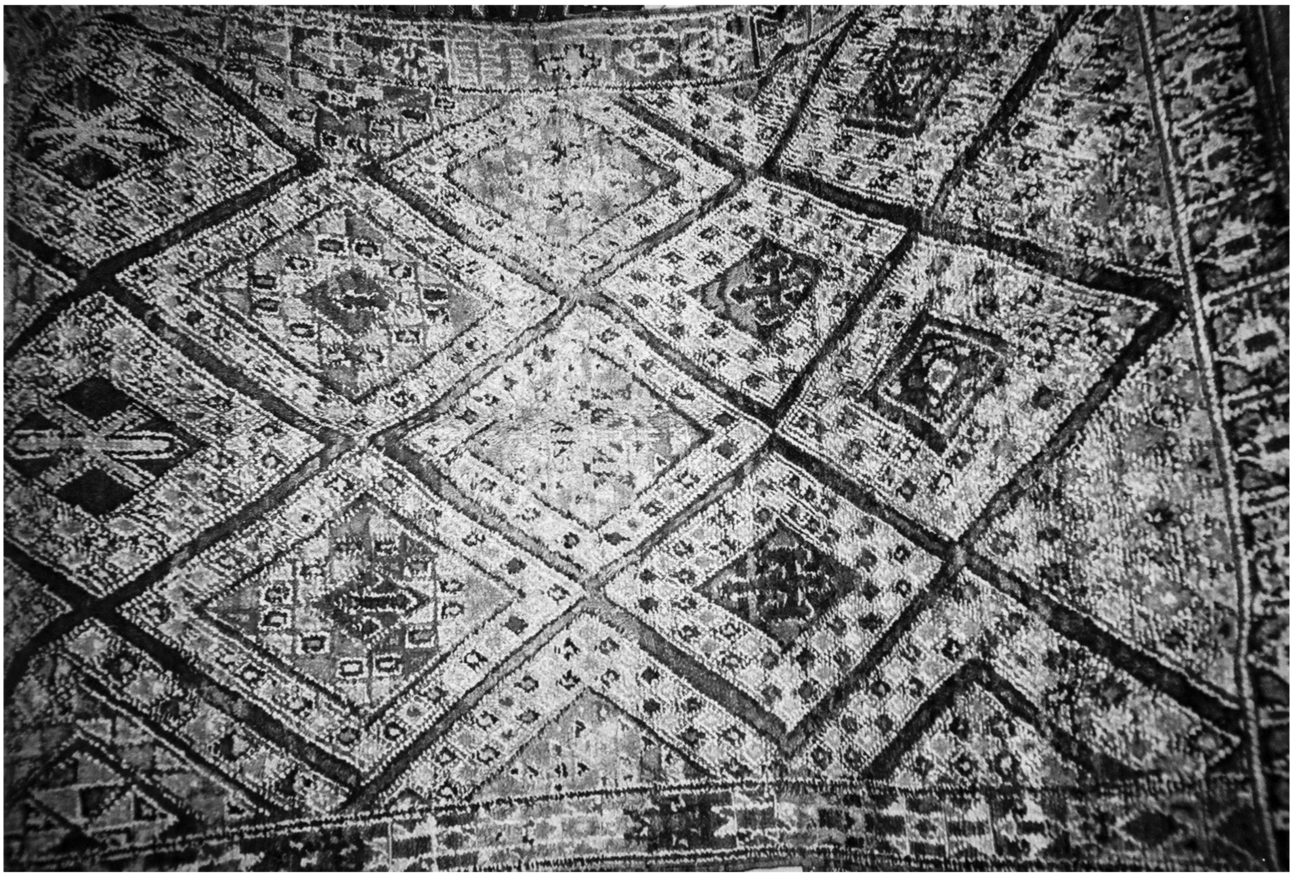

Figure 24. Variations in textile composition, various regions in Morocco.

But there is an additional factor to take into account within the rural context: male members of the community are totally excluded from the weaving process. Moreover, weavers' knowledge is kept hidden in public conversations. This knowledge is transmitted in a non-verbal manner, only made accessible by becoming initiated through the weaving process. On considering this 'invisibility of production', two aspects of weaving practice are brought to light.[49] Firstly, weaving remains a topic that is not discussed with those outside the circle of initiated weavers – local people or foreigners alike. Hence, collectors and researchers who try to gain information in casual visits either leave empty-handed, or are given standard answers to satisfy their curiosity. Secondly, the secrecy of the weaving process adds to weavers' value in terms of 'secrecy as adornment', because they come to be regarded as powerful persons amongst their own society. It is in this way that we can talk of weavers as enchanters.[50]

What about weavers as the enchanted ones? In the context of the weavers, visual captivation is only one consideration amongst the various connections between textiles and weavers. Mastering the technology of symmetry gives weavers prestige and social status in the community. However, even if the visual aspect of the finished textile is considered important among weavers, it is merely one aspect amongst others as far as value is concerned. Several dynamics allow us to see how weavers are enchanted or captivated not by the textiles as finished pieces, but by the process of weaving textiles.

Firstly, the conversion of weaving into an exclusive and secretive social female space stresses the value of solidarity through sharing, helping, teaching and transmitting different types of non-verbal knowledge (such as technical and ritual knowledge). Learning weaving skills and knowledge inculcates the values of diligence, order, self-discipline, and morality; by learning how to make textiles one learns how to become a valuable woman. A weaver becomes synonymous with a good woman who works hard and displays her expertise and abilities through her textiles. The following story exemplifies this and warns against underestimating the value of a good weaver:

> Aisha is a story-teller; on seeing a friend who has

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[49] Roy Dilley, 'The Visibility and Invisibility of Production in Different Social Contexts among Senegalese Craftsmen', in Peter Geschiere and Wim van Binsbergen (eds), *Commodification: Things, Agency, and Identities. The Social Life of Things Revisited* (Berlin/Münster/Vienna/London: LIT Verlag, 2005), pp. 227–242.

[50] For the notion of secrecy as adornment see Elisabeth Hsu, *The Transmission of Chinese Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 56.

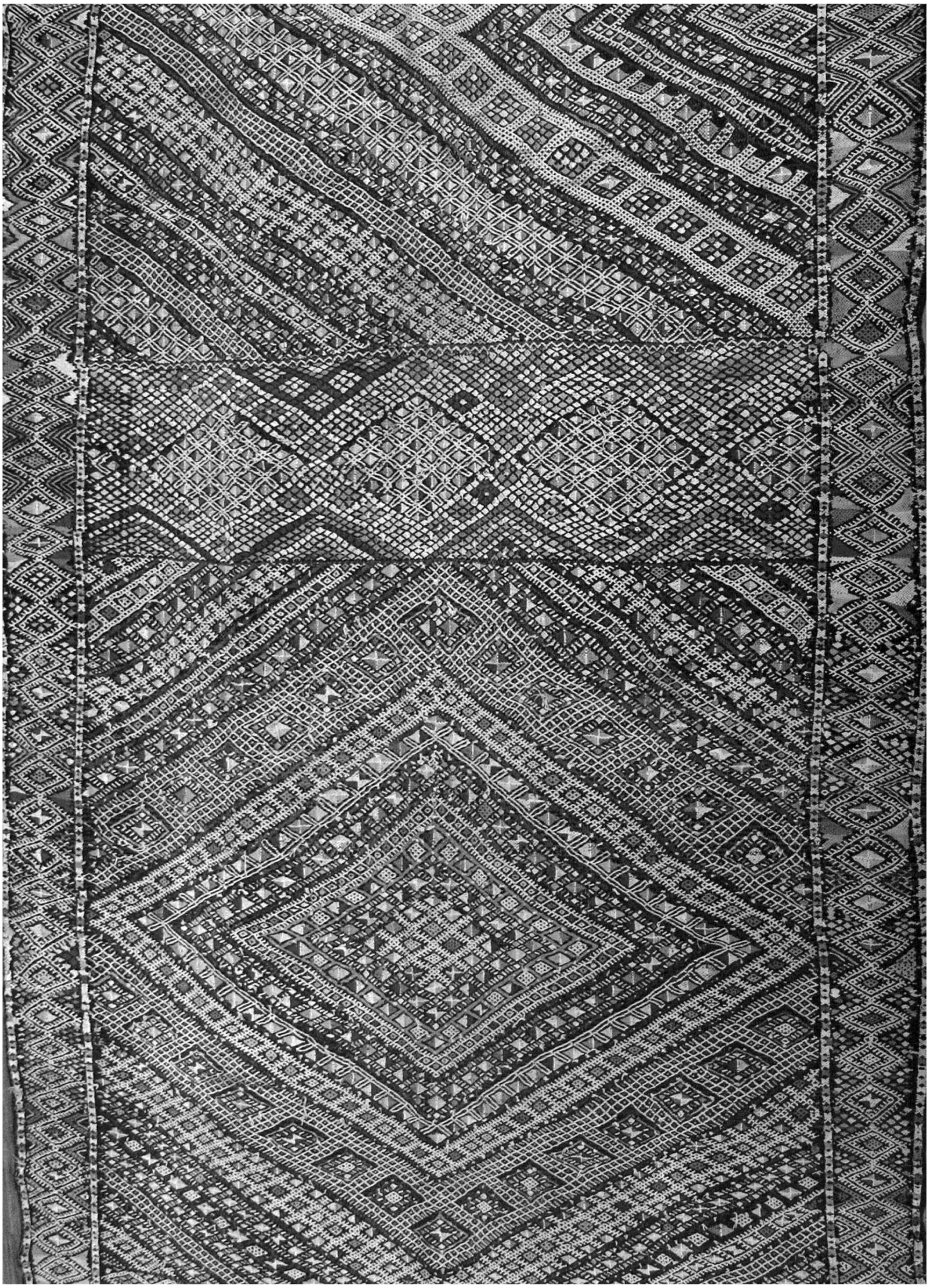

Figure 25. Prestigious textile design, Middle Atlas.

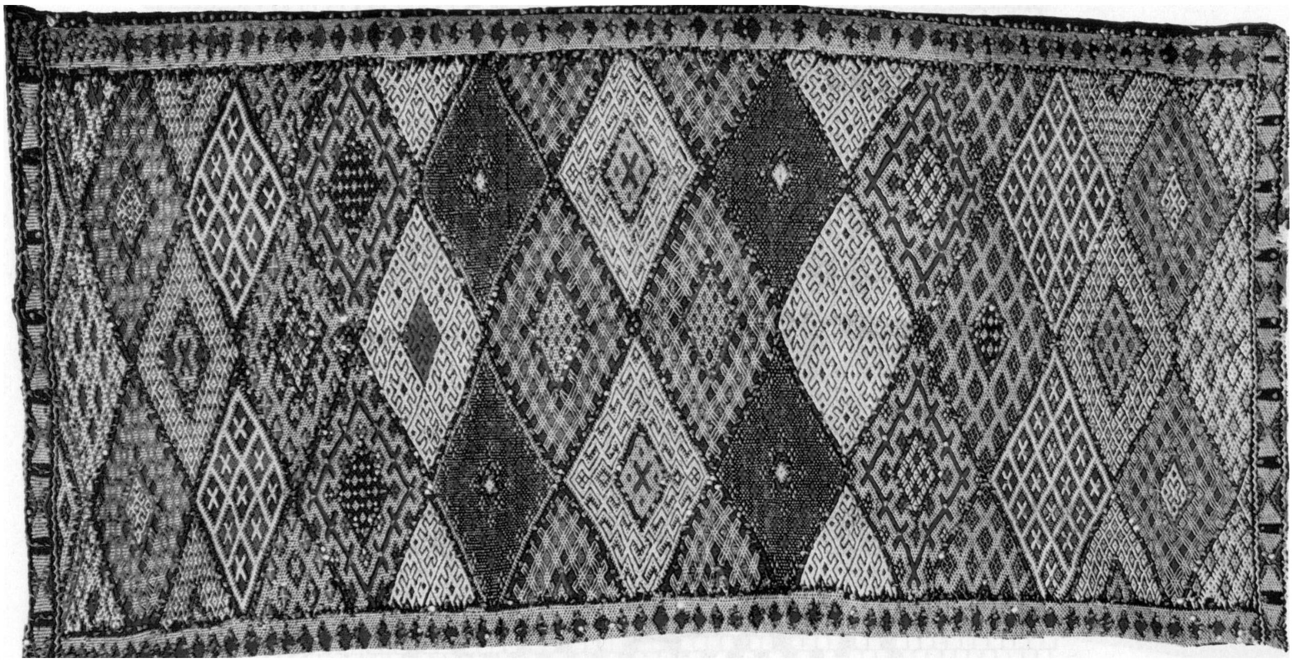

Figure 26. Perfect symmetrical textile, Middle Atlas.

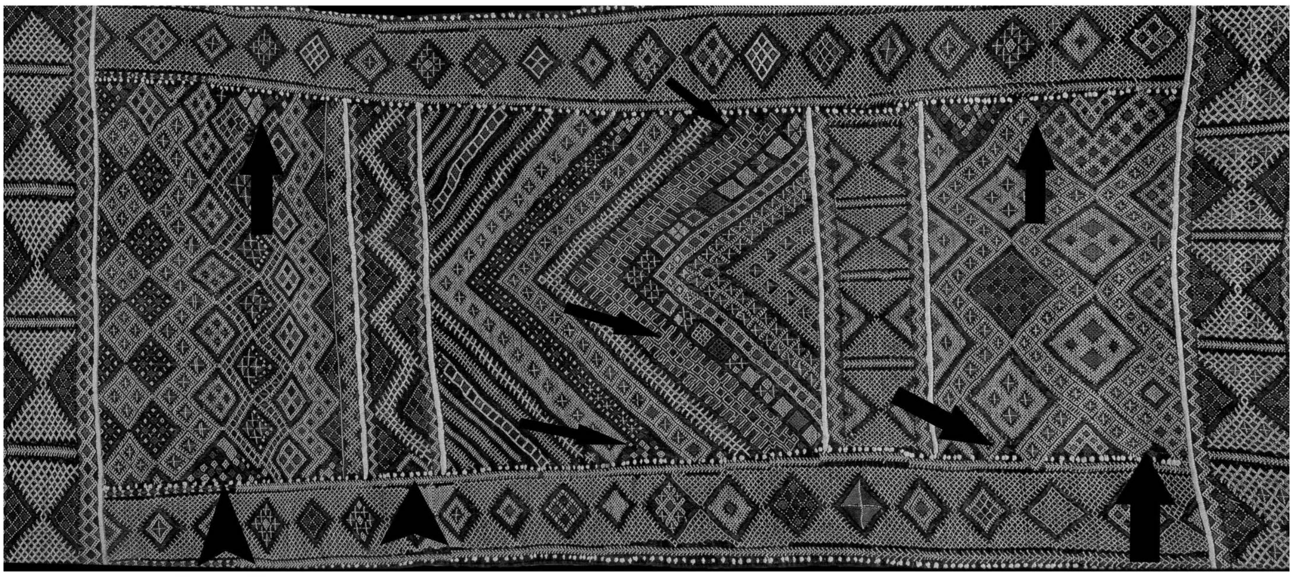

Figure 27. Symmetrical-looking textile displaying several asymmetries, Middle Atlas.

bought a carpet she recalls an old story. A weaver was married to a good poor man. The woman was very diligent; she wove constantly, producing carpets, blankets, and cloths which were appreciated for the quality of her execution. She sold them at the market to support her husband. The couple lived happily but had one regret, for they could not have children. One day the husband said to his wife 'as you did not give me a child I will marry somebody else'. The wife kept quiet for a while, finally she said 'come, my servants, let's leave this place' and taking her cape she left. The husband thought that his wife had lost her mind talking like that to the *jinn*. He mentioned the situation to his neighbour, a wise old teacher, who angrily responded to the man 'Are you so stupid that you did not understand the

> message of your wife? She was not talking to the *jinn*; when she referred to her servants she meant her hands, which have made your life comfortable. But instead of thanking her for that you want to impose a rival on her'.[51]

The social value of Moroccan women has tended to be portrayed in terms of motherhood and marital fidelity, to the exclusion of other roles. In this story the role of a weaver is revealed to be as important as that of a mother.

Secondly, technical and non-technical parameters can forge lasting relationships between several weavers, and between an apprentice and her master. Third is the transformation of the practice of weaving into a female devotional space, which transmits *baraka*, and becomes a space where weavers exercise and take control of their relationship with the Divine.[52] Therefore, as well as captivating their own society, weavers seem in turn captivated by the process of weaving. No matter how many textiles a weaver has, or what her socio-economic situation may be, she always has a loom in progress, and spends a lot of her time engaged in weaving. We can now better understand how it is that weaving in rural Morocco is, in Maussian terminology, a 'total social fact' that integrates technical, religious, social and aesthetic factors.[53]

The power conferred upon weaving makes weavers – especially master weavers – powerful and respected, not only within the circle of weavers but also in the eyes of their own community. The contribution of women through their production of prestigious textiles is a fundamental aspect of rural life. Prestige does not reside primarily in the making of textiles but in the fact that the women themselves are transformed into master weavers, and therefore achieve recognition as persons of high status. Being a weaver is a means of defining womanhood and a specific social position. This is not exclusive to rural Morocco; scholars studying the processes of contemporary textile production in other parts of the world have documented the same phenomenon.[54]

In contrast to the weaver MRT collectors consider that a strong power resides in the asymmetric textiles that they regard to be works of art. These differences in values and perceptions are in part due to what Nicholas Thomas termed the 'promiscuity of objects', since objects do not have fixed and stable meanings themselves.[55] Precisely because these textiles cannot be read and do not speak for themselves, they are prone to endowment with whatever values and meanings the beholder wants to assign to them. In this respect, the asymmetry of the textiles is an enchanting factor, which captivates collectors and creates in them a powerful connection and attachment to their collections.

MRT collectors see specific asymmetric textiles as works of art, and thus classify weavers as artists, but we do not see weavers sharing the celebrity or monetary value that their textiles achieve. In collectors' exhibitions and catalogues weavers tend to remain voiceless, anonymous, and invisible. This situation is also linked to the particularly secretive character of weaving and the invisibility of weaving production. One result of this is that some MRT collectors are considered to be experts on Moroccan textiles. Many of those collectors tend to assume that the power of their textiles resides in hidden meanings. This paper has illustrated that while a hidden meaning does exist, it is not displayed visually to be read as a text or deciphered as a code carrying secret messages. Instead, the secret meaning is in the weaving process.

The production of textiles by Moroccan women has remained a field dominated by MRT collectors.[56] One such collector writes: 'little is known about how [Moroccan] weavers perceive their own textiles, how much they signify wealth to a tribal woman, in what ways does the quality of their weave display the dignity, skills, and knowledge of their social and physical environment to other tribal members'.[57]

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[51] Yamina Fekkar, 'L'ouvrage et le plaisir du temps', in Monique Gadant and Michèle Kasriel (eds), *Femmes du Maghreb au présent* (Paris: CNRS, 1990), pp. 298–299.

[52] This aspect falls outside of the scope of this paper. See Ali-de-Unzaga, 'On the Importance of Being a Weaver' pp. 6–13.

[53] Marcel Mauss, 'Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques', *Année Sociologique* (1925), pp. 30–186. However, in the Moroccan case the power does not reside so much in the object, as Mauss argued, as it does in the process of making it. See also Amiria Henare, 'Nga Aho Tipuna (Ancestral Threads): Maori Cloaks from New Zealand', in Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller (eds), *Clothing as Material Culture* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2005), pp. 121–138.

[54] Cf. Roy M. Dilley, *Weavers among the Tukolor of the Senegal River Basin: A Study of their Social Position and Economic Organization* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis: University of Oxford, 1984); *idem*, 'Secrets and Skills: Apprenticeship among Tukolor Weavers', in Michael W. Coy (ed.), *Apprenticeship: From Theory to Method and Back Again* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 181–198; Ruth Barnes, *The Ikat Textiles of Lamalera: A Study of an Eastern Indonesian Weaving Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1989); *eadem*, 'Women as Headhunters: The Making and Meaning of Textiles in a South Asian Context', in Ruth Barnes and Joanne B. Eicher (eds), *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1992), pp. 29–43; *eadem*, 'Moving Between Cultures: Textiles as a Source of Innovation in Kédang, Eastern Indonesia', in Ruth Barnes (ed.), *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies* (London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), pp. 150–162; Janet Hoskins, 'Why do Ladies Sing the Blues? Indigo Dyeing, Cloth Production, and Gender Symbolism in Kodi', in Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider (eds), *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington DC/London: Smithsonian, 1989), pp. 142–174; Maureen A. MacKenzie, *Androgynous Objects: String Bags and Gender in Central New Guinea* (Chur/Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991); and Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). Bray coined the term 'gynotechniques' to illustrate the technological domain of weaving which defined women's place and roles in Chinese society. See also Renne, *Cloth that Does Not Die*; D.Y. Begay, 'Shi' Sha' Hane' (My Story)', in Eulalie Bonar (ed.), *Woven by the Grandmothers: Nineteenth-Century Navajo Textiles from the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 1996), pp. 10–27; Gavin, *Women's Warpath*; Fee, *C'est l'habit qui fait la personne*; and Lidia D. Sciama, *A Venetian Island: Environment, History and Change in Burano* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).

[55] Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 208.

[56] Studies of women in the Middle East and North Africa have generally been concerned with topics such as domestic space, resistance to male hegemony, women's rights, personal status in the context of the law, and official religious and political ideologies concerning women. Instances where textiles are considered have tended to focus on the veil or 'Islamic dress': cf. Aisha Belarbi, 'Research in the Social Sciences on Women in Morocco', in UNESCO, *Social Science Research and Women in the Arab World* (Paris: Frances Pinter, 1984), p. 79; Cynthia Nelson, 'Old Wine, New Bottles: Reflections and Projections Concerning Research on Women in Middle Eastern Societies', in Earl L. Sullivan and Jacqueline S. Ismael (eds), *The Contemporary Study of the Arab World* (Alberta: University

This paper has illustrated the captivating ways in which high value is given to master weavers in their own communities, and in so doing it has also explored how the collectors of Moroccan rural textiles experience and engage with the captivating power of textiles. Despite the specificities of each context – often the values cherished by one group are the exact opposite of the values appreciated by another – all those considered here have created strong perceptions and powerful meanings around Moroccan rural textiles. This in turn defines their value in society, and their role in the construction of personhood. In the case of Moroccan rural textiles it is clear that people make textiles, but also that textiles make people.

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of Alberta Press, 1991), p. 137; Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham, 'Approaches to the Study of Dress in the Middle East', in Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Surrey: Curzon, 1997), p. 12; Nikki R. Keddie, 'Women in the Limelight: Some Recent Books on Middle Eastern Women's History since 1800', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34/3 (2002), p. 555; Yedida Kalfon Stillman, *Arab Dress: A Short History from the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); and Saba Mahmood, 'Anthropology and the Study of Women in Islamic Cultures', in *The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 312. To the best of my knowledge, the only ethnographic account that deals in some detail with the production of textiles in the Middle Atlas of Morocco is Brinkley Messick, 'Subordinate Discourse: Women, Weaving and Gender Relations in North Africa', *American Ethnologist*, 14/2 (1987), pp. 210–225. His account requires extensive clarification, but the scope of this paper does not allow for its inclusion.

[57] Alfred H. Saulniers, *Ait Bou Ichaouen: Weavings of a Nomadic Berber Tribe* (Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2003), p. 174.

UNRAVELLING THE ENIGMATIC FOURTEENTH-CENTURY MAMLUK AND MONGOL FINE WARES: HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Rosalind A. Wade Haddon

Before identifying 'the problem' the 'fine wares' under discussion need to be described. In the English-language literature the terms 'fritwares' or 'stonepaste wares' are generally used, but these terms can be misleading, and I prefer to use the term 'siliceous composite-bodied wares'. The body is made up predominantly of ground quartz – usually ground pebbles sourced from riverbeds, or in some cases fine sand – a small proportion of whitish clay, and a similar one of ground frit, or silica calcined with a vegetal flux, which produces a glass which is then pulverised. This powder is also used for the transparent alkaline glazes of these wares. The resulting material was not as plastic as ordinary clay, and to deal with the challenge of throwing these pots, potters generally used clay or stucco moulds to form the shapes and finished them off on the wheel, adding any feet, spouts, and knobs at this stage. No workshop evidence for such a process has been excavated in recent times in Iran, Egypt or Syria, but earthenware moulds for the twelfth- and thirteenth-century wares can be found in many collections,[1] and relevant recorded observations will be noted below; there is textual information giving detailed recipes for the Iranian products,[2] and on the Volga sites stucco moulds have been found.

The seeming uniformity of many of these Mongol-period fourteenth-century fine glazed wares has confused collectors and curators for the past century. The impetus for this topic was my discovery, when volunteering in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, that in many cases curators are unable to identify the area in which some of these wares had been manufactured, and furthermore that various dealers have added to this general confusion by assigning provenance by perceived market forces. Registration entries marked 'Syria or Iran' are regrettable and there is an urgent need to correct these. The period covered is roughly the hundred years from the late thirteenth through the late fourteenth centuries, approximately the period covered by the so-called *pax tartarica* or *mongolica*.[3] When exploring a recurring bird motif Ernst Grube demonstrated that in this period, and well into the fifteenth century, there was indeed an international style that encompassed Central Asia, Iran, Egypt and Syria.[4] He traced a westward Chinese influence from a Yuan vessel, which certainly demonstrates how complex and frequently frustrating this quest is.

Marcus Milwright noted in an article on pottery as mentioned in the written sources of the Ayyubid to Mamluk periods (c. 567–923 H/1171–1517 CE) that these sources are limited in their help,[5] but they do indicate that there was an awareness of both physical differences in ceramic materials, and different production areas. For example, the Yemeni chronicler al-Khazraji recorded that in 795/1392 the Rasulid sultan of Yemen, Ashraf II, used the following for his sons' circumcision ceremony:

> Five hundred dishes of Chinese porcelain (*sahn al-sini*), Persian ware (*qashani*), Zabid earthenware (*fakhkhar al-zabidi*), vessels of numerous shapes and decorations, 'Cairo-made' wares (*al-qahiriyya*), and 'Shayzar-made' wares (*al-shayzariyya*).[6]

There are some early archaeological studies in the former Mamluk territories: those carried out by the Germans at Baalbek in the early 1900s;[7] French/Egyptian investigations at Fustat from around 1910, which were ongoing through to the 1930s;[8] the Danish excavations at Hama in the 1930s;[9] and numerous observations by scholars of the

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[1] See Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 134 ff.

[2] Yves Porter, 'Textes persans sur la céramique', in Živa Vesel, Hossein Beikbaghban and Bertrand Thierry de Crussol des Epesse (eds), *La science dans le monde iranien à l'époque islamique: actes du colloque tenu à l'Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg, 6–8 juin 1995* (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 2004), pp. 165–189.

[3] Arthur Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery: Persia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 3.

[4] Ernst Grube, 'Notes on the decorative arts of the Timurid period III. On a type of Timurid pottery design: the flying-bird-pattern', *Oriente Moderno*, XV (LXXVI) 2 (1996), pp. 601–609.

[5] Marcus Milwright, 'Pottery in the written sources of the Ayyubid-Mamluk period (c. 567–923/1171–1517)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African* Studies, 62/3 (1999), pp. 504–518.

[6] From the '*Uqud al-lu'lu'iyya* of al-Khazraji: see 'Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Khazraji, *The Pearl-Strings: A History of the Resuliyy Dynasty of Yemen (Kitab al-'Uqud al-lu'lu'iyya fi akhbar al-dawlat al-rasuliyya)*, trans. and annotated by J.W. Redhouse *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 1907), pp. 207–208. The translation of '*qashani*' as 'Persian ware' is debatable, and in my thesis I will argue that this was possibly a generic term for siliceous composite-bodied, rather as '*al-sini*' has become a generic term for finewares.

[7] Friedrich Sarre, 'Keramik', in Theodor Wiegand (ed.), *Baalbek: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen in den Jahren 1898 bis 1905*, vol. III (Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter 1925), pp. 115–131.

[8] See Aly Bey Bahgat and Félix Massoul, *La Céramique Musulmane de l'Egypte* (Cairo: Musée d'Arabe, 1930), for a summation of these activities.

[9] Poul Jørgen Riis and Vagn Poulsen, *Hama: les Verreries et Poteries Médiévales*, vol. 4 part 2 of *Hama, Fouilles et Recherches de la Fondation Carlsberg 1931–38* (Copenhagen: Fondation Carlsberg, 1957).

French Institute in Damascus over the same period.[10] Post World War II, many more scientific investigations in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, eastern Anatolia, Jordan, the West Bank and Israel have added and continue to add to the corpus of material, but sadly to my knowledge there has not been a recent scientific excavation of a kiln producing these fine wares for the Mamluk period, and more specifically the fourteenth century. We do have Aly Bey Bahgat's observations from his 1913 article on Fustat 'excavations', wherein he published remarks on the potters' quarter near the mausoleum of Abu Saoud, Fustat: he investigated a kiln producing underglaze-painted wares and imitation celadons simultaneously,[11] and even included a sketch of a reconstructed kiln.

In Damascus there are kiln wasters and a similar set of observations to those of Bahgat were made in the 1920s, wherein Georges Contenau states that Eustache de Lorey found two kilns at Bab al-Sharqi.[12] Véronique François, who has been responsible for excavating the Mamluk and Ottoman levels in the recent French excavations on the Damascus citadel, includes pictures of some of de Lorey's Bab al-Sharqi finds in her recent DVD.[13] She indicates that she found these images in the Louvre collection, and that they came from random excavations in the late nineteenth century, but as some of these images were published in Contenau's article, a subsequent correspondence with Carine Juvin at the Louvre has proved that they are indeed from de Lorey's finds. Edward Gibbs cites 'evidence for a distribution centre at Kafr Batna, a small village four kilometres east of Bab Sharqi [*sic*] where a commercial excavation in the summer of 1996 yielded a large number of fragments of Raqqa and underglaze decorated Mamluk and early Ottoman wares',[14] which he illustrated in his article published in the *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society*.[15]

The picture is very different for the former Mongol Jochid territories of southern Russia and former Soviet territories, where there is a considerable amount of material evidence at the Golden Horde settlements on the lower Volga, the Black Sea northern littoral, the Caucasus, southwestern Kazakhstan on the Ural River, and the former Khwarazmshah homeland south of the Aral Sea in present day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, many of which were established on virgin soil and thus present us with invaluable material in firmly datable contexts. Added to which, a series of kilns were excavated by German Alexey Fyodorov-Davydov at Selitronnoye or Sarai, one of the Golden Horde capitals on the Volga, which have greatly added to the picture of organisation within pottery workshops.[16]

To date no other Golden Horde fineware production centre has been published, but there are indications that there were others: at Saraichik, on the Ural River, where the excavators have found kiln slag with a chemical match to the finewares found there;[17] at Shemakha Kala to the south of the Aral Sea in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, in addition to Mizdakhan, west of the modern Soviet city of Nukus and the Amu Darya/Oxus, also in Uzbekistan; and at Konya Urgench, in present day Turkmenistan. The wealth of the latter city was well described by Ibn Battuta.[18] Uzbek archaeologist M. Sh. Kdirniyazov has very kindly made a copy of his report on his excavations at Mizdakhan available to me, and he has evidence for ceramic production, but to date has only excavated kilns that were producing green-glazed *sgraffito* earthenwares. There is also a possibility of another production centre at Solkhat or Stary Krym, in the Crimea/ present-day Ukraine. Mark Kramarovsky, who has been working at Stary Krym for several decades, has only recorded kilns producing glazed earthenwares, but after his 2007 summer season he reported by email that they had excavated some fifty-odd kilns; however, he has yet to answer my question as to whether they were producing what the Russians call *kashin*, and translate as 'semi-faience'.[19] This is the same siliceous composite body under discussion.

For Iran the picture is much the same as that for Egypt and Syria. As stated above, al-Khazraji, in his description of the wares used at the circumcision celebrations for Sultan Ashraf's sons, specifically mentioned *al-qashani* wares: a reference to the best-known production centre, Kashan in central Iran, but as reported in footnote 6 (above), I am proposing in my thesis that this is possibly a generic term for these siliceous composite-bodied wares. On the archaeological record, for Kashan there are kiln remains observed by Mehdi Bahrami in the late 1930s and published in *Athar-e Iran*,[20] but no more recent scientific investigations as far as I can ascertain. In addition to this there is documentary evidence for the manufacturing process of these composite-bodied vessels given by Abu'l-Qasim al-Kashani, a member of a well-known potting family who was employed in the Ilkhanid chancery under Rashid al-Din Fazl Allah (1247–1318), the author of the famous *Compendium of Chronicles*.[21] There is, however, useful archaeological material, for example that uncovered by the American investigations at Hasanlu in northeastern Iran, where an Ilkhanid fort was excavated, producing a corpus of typical Ilkhanid turquoise and black underglaze-painted and *lajvardina* (overglaze enamels with gold leaf most commonly on an opaque cobalt glaze) wares which will be discussed below.[22]

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[10] Georges Contenau, 'L'Institut français d'archéologie et d'art musulmans à Damas', *Syria*, V (1924), 203–211.

[11] Aly Bey Bahgat, 'Les fouilles de Foustât: découverte d'un four de potier arabe datant du XIV^e siècle', *Bulletin de l'Institut Egyptien*, 5e série, VIII (1913), pp. 233–245.

[12] Contenau, 'L'Institut français d'archéologie', p. 205; pl. XLVIII, 2.

[13] Véronique François, *Céramiques de la citadelle de Damas: époques Mamelouke et Ottomane* (Aix-en-Provence: CNRS, 2008).

[14] Edward Gibbs, 'Mamluk Ceramics 648–923 AH/ AD 1250–1517', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society 1998–1999*, 63 (2000), p. 24 and n. 13.

[15] *Ibid.*, figs 4–7, pp. 22–23 and fig. 12, p. 29.

[16] German Alexey Fyodorov-Davydov, *The Culture of the Golden Horde Cities*, trans. H. Bartlett Wells (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984), p. 146 ff.

[17] Information gathered at the S.P. Tolstov 100th Anniversary Conference in Nukus and Bustan, October 2007, from the Kazakh delegate.

[18] H.A.R. Gibb (trans. and ed.), *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325–1354*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Hakluyt Society, 1971), p. 545.

[19] V.Y. Koval, 'Eastern pottery from the excavations at Novgorod', in Clive Orton (ed.), *The Pottery from Medieval Novgorod and its Region* (London: UCL Press/ Oxbow Books, 2006), pp. 162–163.

[20] Mehdi Bahrami, 'Contribution à l'Étude de la Céramique Musulmane de l'Iran: la Forme des fours de Kashan au VIIIème siècle (XIIIème AD)', *Athar-e Iran*, 3 (1938), pp. 225–229.

In building up a corpus of comparative wares it became apparent that both shape and decorative features could be helpful in establishing diagnostic differences. In addition, according to the archaeological evidence, some decorative devices were popular in one area, and totally absent in another. This morphological approach has been suggested for the eastern Mediterranean in the past by the Byzantinist Janet Buerger,[23] but her evident lack of understanding of these eastern wares immediately created a problem. Cristina Tonghini at Qala'at Ja'bar used shape, decorative design, and body to distinguish between the different periods, but did not identify any Ilkhanid or Golden Horde imports.[24] Nor did she settle for Damascus as the sole Mamluk centre of production by the fourteenth century, as other authors have done.[25] Ceramic kilnologist Jacques Thiriot, at Aix-en-Provence, has been exploring the technical uniformity of firing techniques throughout the Mediterranean, and has firsthand experience in Syria from the kilns excavated at Balis Meskene by the French in 1973; Marthe Bernus-Taylor has yet to publish the pottery, but Thiriot did include the technical information in his doctoral thesis, which is due to be published shortly.[26] He indicated that the Balis kilns went out of production with the 1260 Mongol devastations, but matching kiln techniques persisted and were in use at Sarai in the fourteenth century, as well as at numerous production centres in the western Mediterranean.

An understanding of the different shapes of the wares under question has been alluded to, but to my knowledge no one has actually produced a study exploring all these differences.[27] It has long been acknowledged that the inspiration for all these fine wares was China, and there are some shapes, such as the hemispherical bowls (frequently referred to as 'lotus bowls'), that slavishly copied their prototypes.[28] However, vessels that were produced for local usage, such as medicine jars or *albarelli*, took on distinctive regional differences. In the Golden Horde territories there was the so-called 'rosewater bowl', which is unknown elsewhere, and in the Iranian world the T-rim bowl. Cataloguing the decorative repertoire on these different vessels it is possible to build up a picture of regional diagnostic decoration too. Workshop signatures are also evident on some of the Mamluk products, and some petrographic studies have been made to estimate whether the body fabric can help identify a production centre too.[29] Unfortunately few of these results have been calibrated in one academic centre, so they are confusing and can be misleading. Several pieces of known provenance have been tested by geologist Chris Doherty in the Oxford University Laboratory confirming their physical make-up, differentiating siliceous from calcareous clay bodies.

Shapes and Decoration

In figure 1 three different *albarelli* shapes are depicted. The Golden Horde slender shape is consistent, but as far as I can see they were uniformly made of glazed earthenware, usually with *sgraffito* decoration. However, the Mamluk and Ilkhanid examples have a siliceous composite-bodied fabric, and both are of equally uniform shape for their respective regions; interestingly, examples of both shapes have been found in Iraq.[30] The slightly everted lip was thought to facilitate attaching parchment covers to conserve whatever they contained; indeed a complete example with cover has been found by Italian archaeologists in the tomb of Saint Nicolò da Myra.[31] There are a few ceramic lids in collections too, such as the Ilkhanid *lajvardina* example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.[32] Their waisted form would have facilitated handling when one reached for them from a pharmacist's shelf. These *albarelli* were

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[21] See footnote 6 and James W. Allan, 'Abu'l-Qasim's treatise on ceramics', *Iran*, 11 (1973), pp. 111–120.

[22] Michael D. Danti, *The Ilkhanid Heartland: Hasanlu Tepe (Iran) Period I* (Hasanlu Excavation Reports vol. II, general ed. R.H. Dyson, Jr.) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 2004).

[23] Janet E. Buerger, 'Morphological analysis of medieval fine pottery: provenance and trade patterns in the Mediterranean world', in Kathleen Biddick (ed.), *Archaeological Approaches to Medieval Europe* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1984), pp. 203–222.

[24] Cristina Tonghini, *Qala'at Ja'bar Pottery: A Study of a Syrian Fortified Site of the Late 11th–14th Centuries* (British Academy Monographs in Archaeology, no. 11) (Oxford: British Academy, 1998), p. 51.

[25] Robert B. Mason and Julia Gonnella, 'The Petrology of Syrian Stonepaste Ceramics: The View from Aleppo', *Journal of Internet Archaeology*, 9 (2000) [accessed 19 May 2011], http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue9/mason_toc.html.

[26] Jacques Thiriot, *Meskêne*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Aix-en-Provence, 2003); soon to be published as *Balis III, Les ateliers de potiers de Balis-Meskéné* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, forthcoming). This information was kindly supplied by Dr. Alastair Northedge, Paris. Thiriot is going to excavate a kiln at Nishapur for the French team currently working there during their upcoming season; information kindly supplied by team member Carine Juvin of the Louvre, October 2008. She also reported that Thiriot's thesis publication is still delayed. Post Script February 2009 – unfortunately their mission to Nishapur was delayed due to visa problems.

[27] James Allan did this in a metalware context in 'Concave or convex? The sources of Jaziran and Syrian metalwork in the 13th century,' in Julian Raby (ed.), *The Art of Syria and the Jazira 1100–1250 (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art I)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 137.

[28] James W. Allan, *Islamic Ceramics* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1991), p. 34.

[29] Marilyn Jenkins, 'Mamluk underglaze-painted pottery: foundations for future study,' *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), p. 95–114; followed by Robert B. Mason, 'Criteria for the Petrographic Characterization of Stonepaste Ceramics,' *Archaeometry*, 37 (August 1995), pp. 307–321.

[30] For a Mamluk shape see Hussain al-Shammri, *Islamic Metalwork and Other Related Objects from the Excavations at Tall Abu Skhayr, al-Daura, Baghdad* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, SOAS, London University, 2 vols, 1986), vol. 2, pl. xlviii and fig. 22e.

[31] Francesca Saccardo, Lorenzo Lazzarini and Michelangelo Munarini, 'Ceramiche importate a Venezia el nel Veneto tra XI e XIV secolo', in Ch. Bakirtzis (ed.), *VIIe Congrès International sur la Céramique Médiévale en Méditerranée, Thessaloniki, 11–16 Octobre 1999* (Athens: Ministry of Culture, 2003), p. 402, fig. 6. In pre-modern England pigs' bladders were used to seal preserving jars. See BBC2's recent series titled *The Victorian Farm*; Pavilion Books have published a companion volume (London: Pavilion Books, 2008).

[32] Most recently published by Stefano Carboni in Stefano Carboni and Linda Komaroff (eds), *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), p. 200, fig. 241.

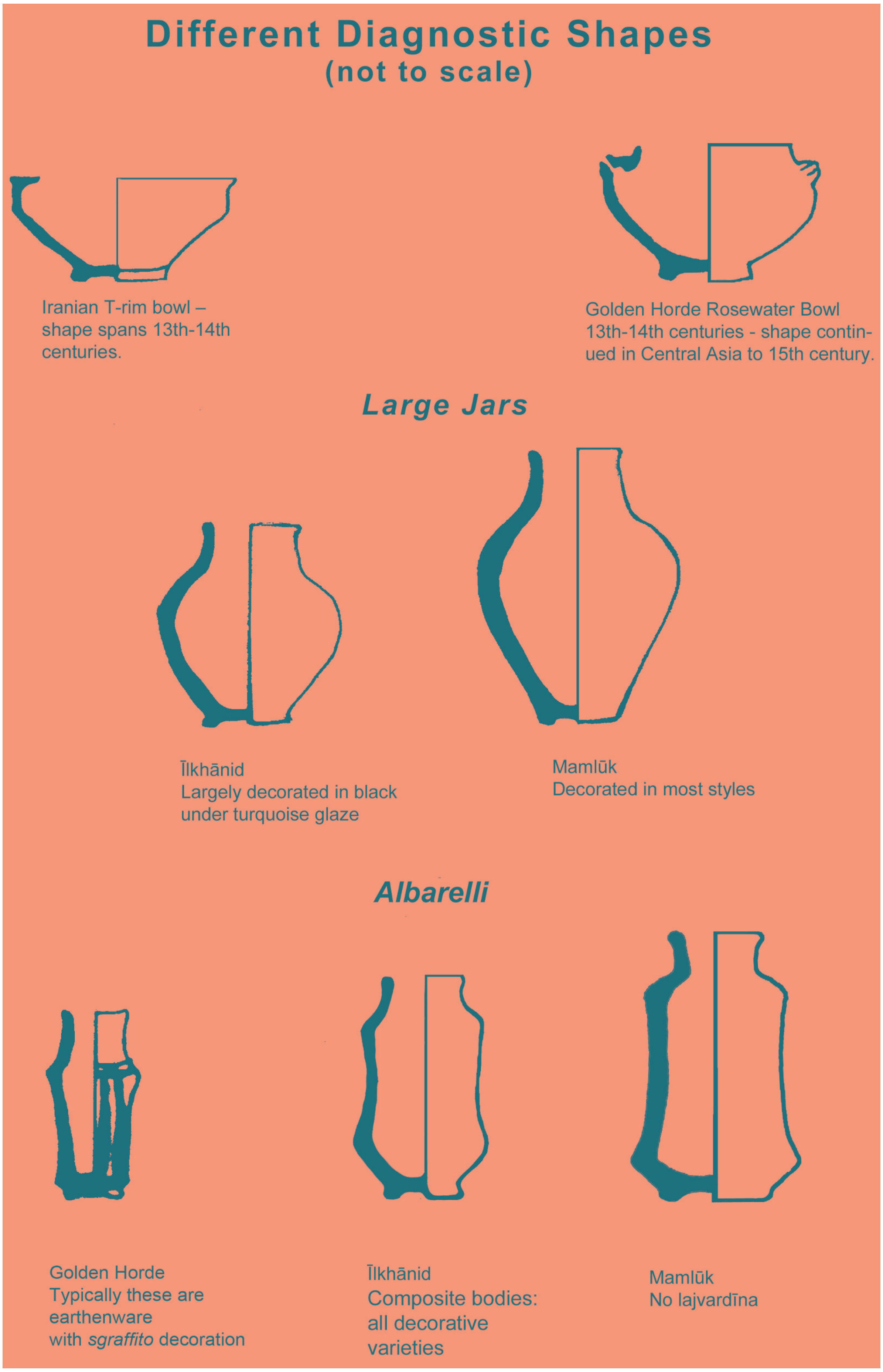
Different Diagnostic Shapes
(not to scale)
Iranian T-rim bowl –
shape spans 13th-14th
centuries.
Golden Horde Rosewater Bowl
13th-14th centuries - shape continued in Central Asia to 15th century.
Large Jars
Īlkhānid
Largely decorated in black
under turquoise glaze
Mamlūk
Decorated in most styles
Albarelli
Golden Horde
Typically these are
earthenware
with *sgraffito* decoration
Īlkhānid
Composite bodies:
all decorative
varieties
Mamlūk
No lajvardīna

Figure 1. Diagnostic shapes.

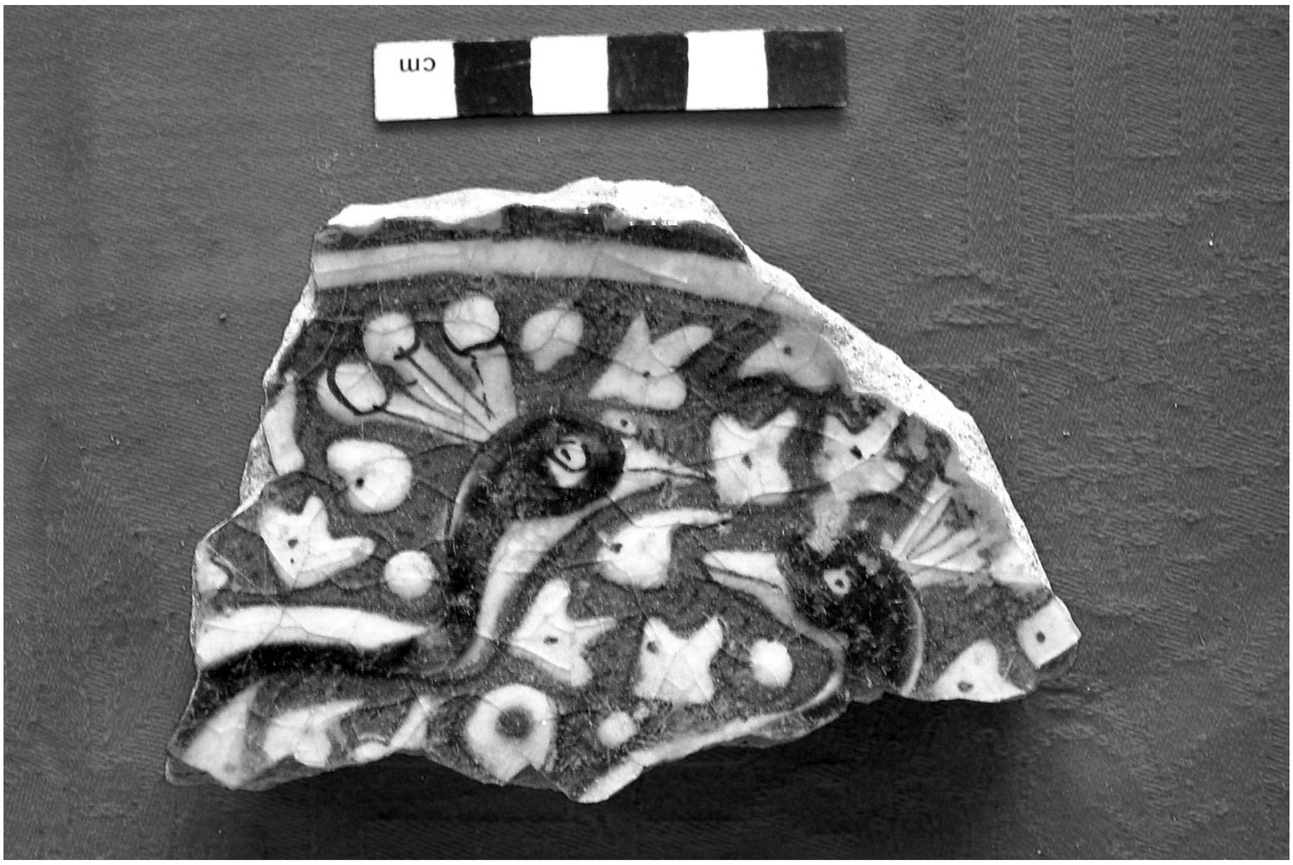

Figure 2. Gayer Anderson Museum, Cairo, #474. Mamluk coloured-ground relief ware with spiky leaves.

extensively copied from the fifteenth century onwards in Italy and the Iberian peninsula. There was also a shape difference between the large Ilkhanid and the Mamluk ovoid jars, with the former being rather squatter. There are many examples of the turquoise and black Iranian wares and the decorative design is ubiquitous on fragmentary finds from Ilkhanid sites; however, Komaroff still sees these examples as being Mamluk,[33] but I can find no grounds to support such an attribution. There are plenty of similarly decorated fragments in an archaeological context in Iran and not one in a Fustat collection, or in the Hama or Baalbek publications.

The Mamluk *albarelli* were typically decorated in so-called imitation Sultanabad slip-relief designs (which are now styled 'coloured-ground wares' in their Iranian context);[34] geometric panel designs ('panel-style'), which includes one dated 1317 in a Naples collection; and a bright blue cobalt glaze with lustre designs. This last technique was also used for Iranian forms, as well as *lajvardina* ones, but no *lajvardina* examples have been found in a Mamluk context, implying that enamelled and gold leaf decoration was popular only in Mongol Iran and the Golden Horde.

After handling considerable amounts of this material in Fustat sherd collections and comparing these examples with whole pieces, metalware, enamelled glass and playing cards, it became obvious to me that the trifoliate spiky-leaf motif was a Mamluk one. Some examples were in relief (fig. 2), but many more were painted onto a flat body (fig. 3). There are numerous bowl base fragments decorated in both flat spiky-leaf motifs and the panel style with the *hijra* dates 44 or 45, with the 700 understood (fig. 4) – a common convention on coins where space did not allow for a full date.[35] With the 1317 Naples *albarello*, cited above, this gives us at least a thirty-year timespan for the panel-style design and thus an indication of the style's longevity. Further confirmation of a Mamluk style is the inclusion of red (fig. 5) in the decorative palate – a throwback to, or continuation of, the Ayyubid decorative style and a colour not found in Iranian examples.

Another Iranian diagnostic shape is the T-rim bowl. There

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[33] Email correspondence 8 March 2004 questioning a Damascus attribution for an example formerly in the LACMA collection and sold as lot number 64 in Christie's sale of 15 October 2002. This was sold at the time of the Madina collection purchase and was replaced by M.2002.1.164, which was formerly in the Kelekian collection and published as pl. 33 in his 1910 catalogue *The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries, 1885–1910* (Paris: H. Clarke), and also as pl. 92 A in Lane's *Early Islamic Pottery*. Despite Kelekian indicating that it came from Sultanabad, Komaroff gives it 'the same Syrian attribution'. When questioned further she stated that it has 'typical Syrian decoration'.

[34] Peter Morgan, 'Some Far Eastern Elements in Colour-ground Sultanabad Wares', in James W. Allan (ed.), *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean Museum,* part 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 19–43.

[35] See Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 217. She cites Boris Marshak, 'Bronzoviy kuvshin iz Samarkanda', in Anatoly A. Ivanov (ed.), *Srednaya Aziya i Iran* (Leningrad: Hermitage Museum, 1972), pp. 61–90.

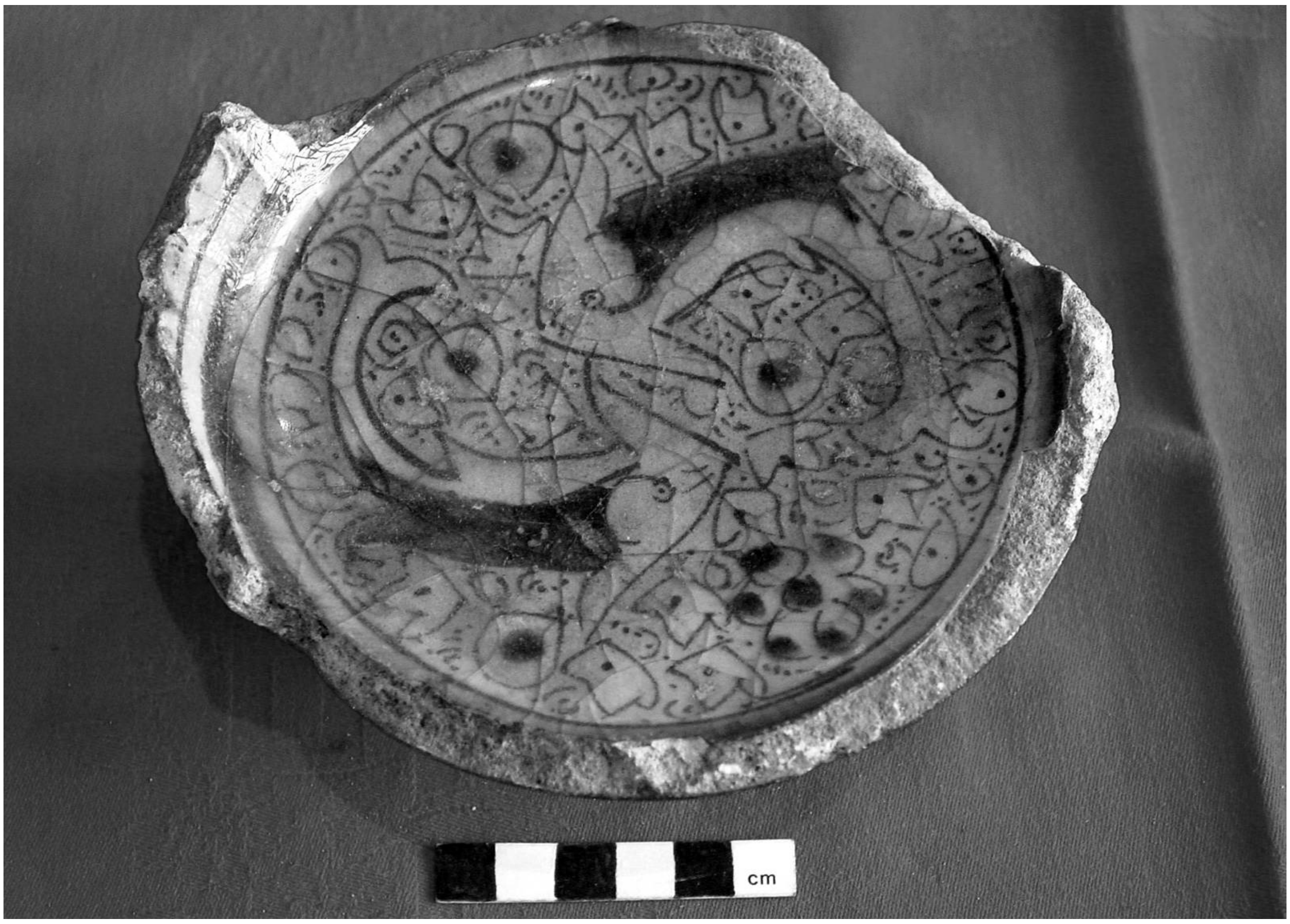

Figure 3. Gayer Anderson Museum, Cairo, #482. Mamluk spiky-leaf example without relief.

are numerous examples with coloured-ground decoration showing distinctive rounded, cotton-wool ball shaped leaves (as opposed to the Mamluk trifoliate spiky leaves), which can be identified with both the hemispherical bowls and *albarelli* of the Ilkhanid form; an example of this decoration is found in figure 6. The T-rim shape appeared in the late twelfth century and had fallen out of use by the late fourteenth century.

It is not known how the coloured-ground form of decoration was transmitted to the Mamluk world. No Iranian examples were excavated in controlled excavations at Fustat or in Alexandria, or found in other Fustat collections elsewhere, so there is no definitive proof that they were exported to Fustat in the fourteenth century at all. Another possibility is that Iranian potters were brought to Cairo in the 1320s after the Treaty of Aleppo with the Ilkhanids.[36] The Danes in Hama identified the T-rim bowl (they found fragments from two different lustre bowls) as an Iranian import and neither they nor the Germans at Baalbek published any underglaze-painted examples. Verena Daiber, who has recently been working on the Baalbek material, has confirmed that in all the undocumented sherds (unfortunately the notebooks from the excavations were destroyed during the civil war) that they processed from Lebanese excavations carried out between 1967 and 1975 there were no imported wares or T-rim examples.[37] Admittedly, in Iran excavated or surveyed examples of these coloured-ground wares are quite rare, and they do not seem to be as robust as their Mamluk imitations; no doubt soil and glaze differences are responsible for this. The T-rim's function remains a problem – the nearest equivalent in metalwares is the bronze cauldron, and all Iranian archaeologists interviewed suggested that the vessels may have been used for traditional stews or *abgusht.* Like the *albarelli*, T-rim bowls are also found with black-under-turquoise-glaze designs, panel styles, and monochrome glazes, including imitation celadon. Hasanlu, the Ilkhanid site mentioned above, represents a microcosm of the ceramics in use by the military at this strategic stronghold, and has an impressive array of both the turquoise-and-black and the *lajvardina* series, and notably no coloured-ground types.[38]

The Golden Horde diagnostic shape is the so-called 'rosewater bowl', or *gyulabdan* (see fig. 7). These bowls

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[36] Rosalind A. Wade Haddon, 'Mongol influences on Mamluk ceramics', in Doris Behrens-Abouseif (ed.), *The Arts of the Mamluks*, in press.

[37] By email, and Verena Daiber, Franziska Bloch and Peter Knözele, *Studien zur spätantiken und islamischen Keramik: Hirbat al-Minya–Baalbeck–Resafa* (Orient-Archäologie, Band 18) (Rahden: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Orient/Leidorf, 2006).

[38] Danti, *The Ilkhanid Heartland.*

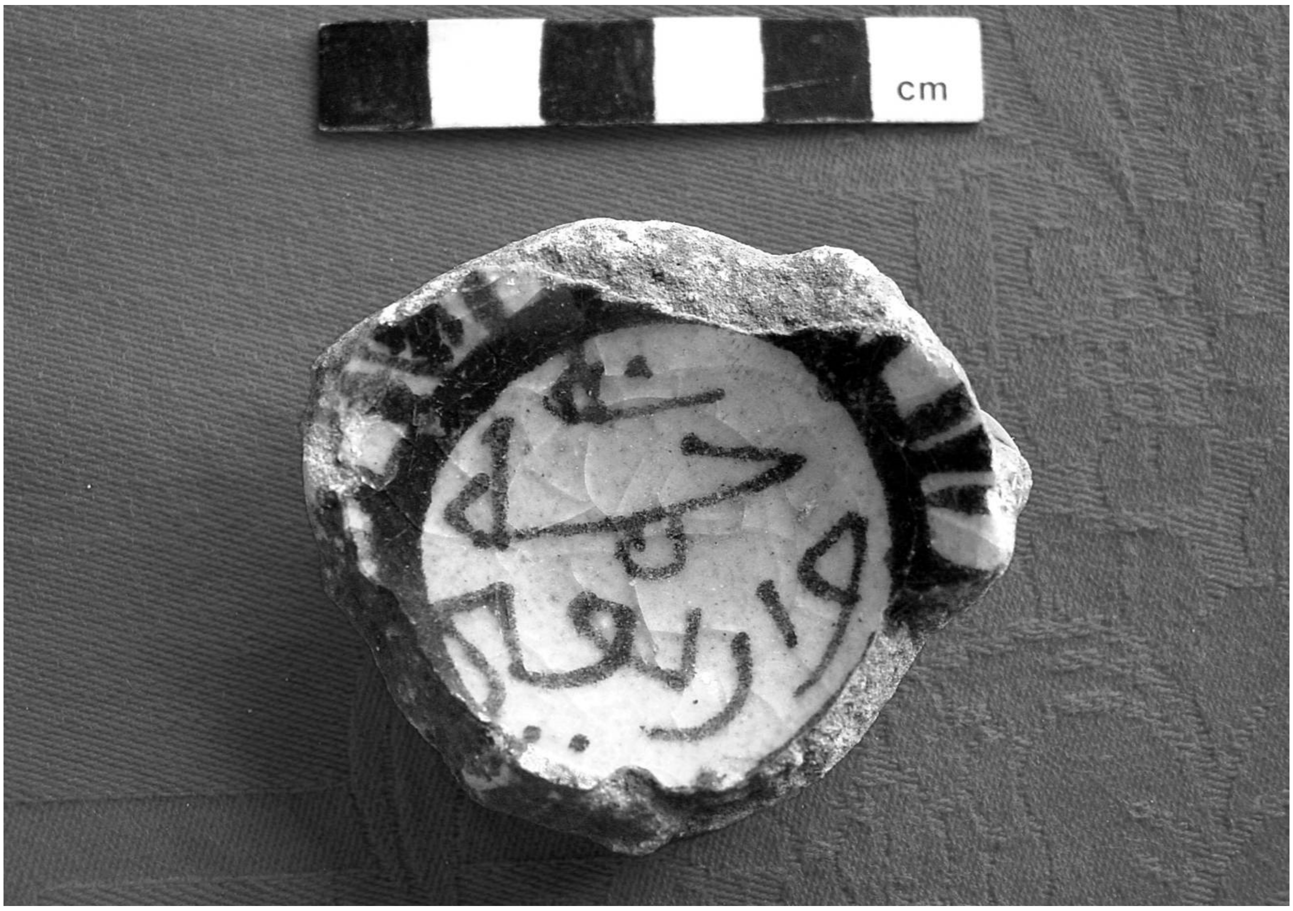

Figure 4. Gayer Anderson Museum, Cairo #543. Base with the year (7)45 H on the interior.

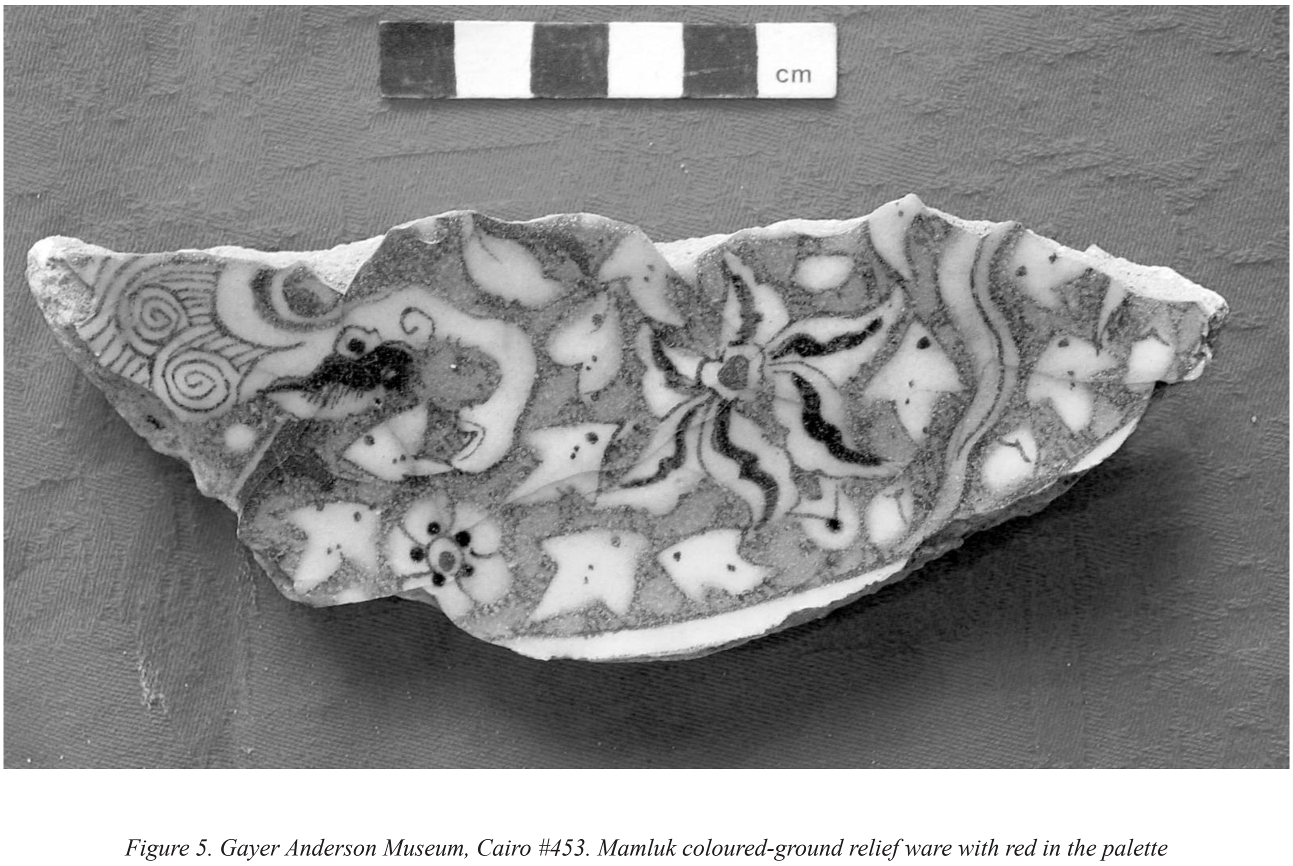

Figure 5. Gayer Anderson Museum, Cairo #453. Mamluk coloured-ground relief ware with red in the palette

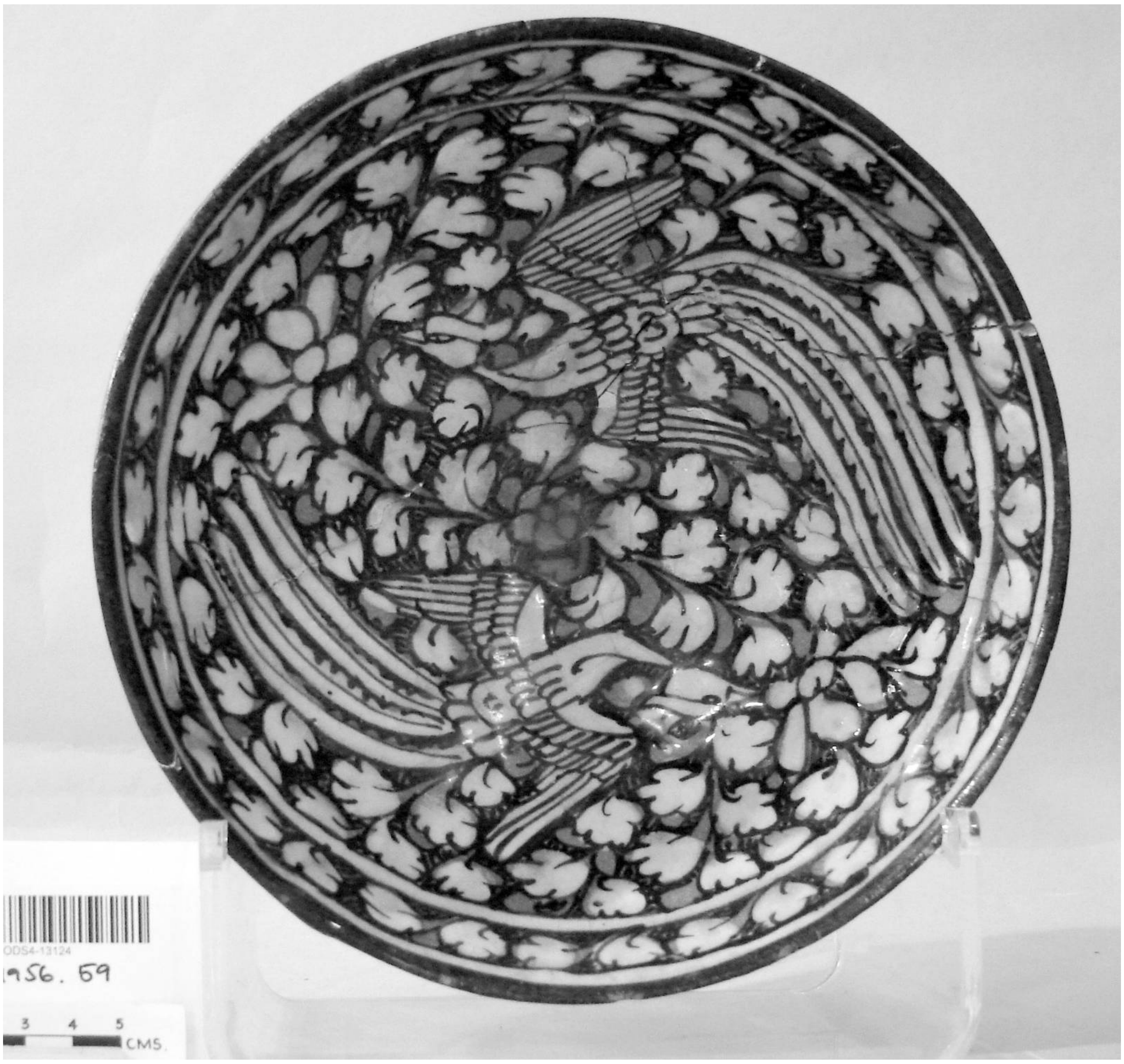

Figure 6. Iranian coloured-ground hemispherical bowl in the Ashmolean Museum collection, inventory number EA 1956.59 – diameter 20.7 cm; height 9.5 cm (by kind permission of the Visitors).

(up to thirty centimetres in diameter) have a single spout and extraordinary applied bulbous 'nipples'. It was not until I went to the Golden Horde exhibition in Kazan in 2006 that I was able to appreciate this curious form. A diminutive profile had been published in the Khorezm reports of S.P. Tolstov's team,[39] but the full impact is only to be found in the round. Figure 8 illustrates a recently excavated example from fourteenth-century Golden Horde levels at Bilyar, on the Volga, which has also been published by the excavator Svetlana Valiullina.[40] This shape is ubiquitous throughout the Golden Horde territories, decorated in a variety of styles: coloured-ground slip relief; moulded relief; black under a turquoise glaze; panel style; and monochrome moulded forms – in other words the full Iranian Mongol repertoire. However, to date I have not found any *lajvardina* examples, which is surprising as it was popular for bowls, bottles and cups, and most likely to have been produced in Sarai too; however, no physical evidence has been found to date. Kramarovsky believes that those examples that have been found with emerald-green bases, such as the bowl in

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[39] N.N. Vakturskaya, (in Russian) 'Chronological classification of medieval ceramics of Khorezm (IX–XVII centuries)', in Sergei Pavlovich Tolstov and M.G. Vorob'eva (eds), *Trudy Khorezmskoy arkheologo - etnograficheskoy ekspeditsii, vol. 4: Keramika Khorezma* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1959), fig. 36, no. 134.

[40] S.I. Valiullina, 'Zolotoordiniskii Bilyar: nachalo iissledovaniy', in Iskander Ajazovich Gilyazov and Ildus K. Zagidyallin (eds), *Istochnikovedenie Istorii Ulusa Dzhuchi (Zolotoi Ordi)* (Kazan: Institut istorii AN RT, 2002), p. 239, fig. 4.

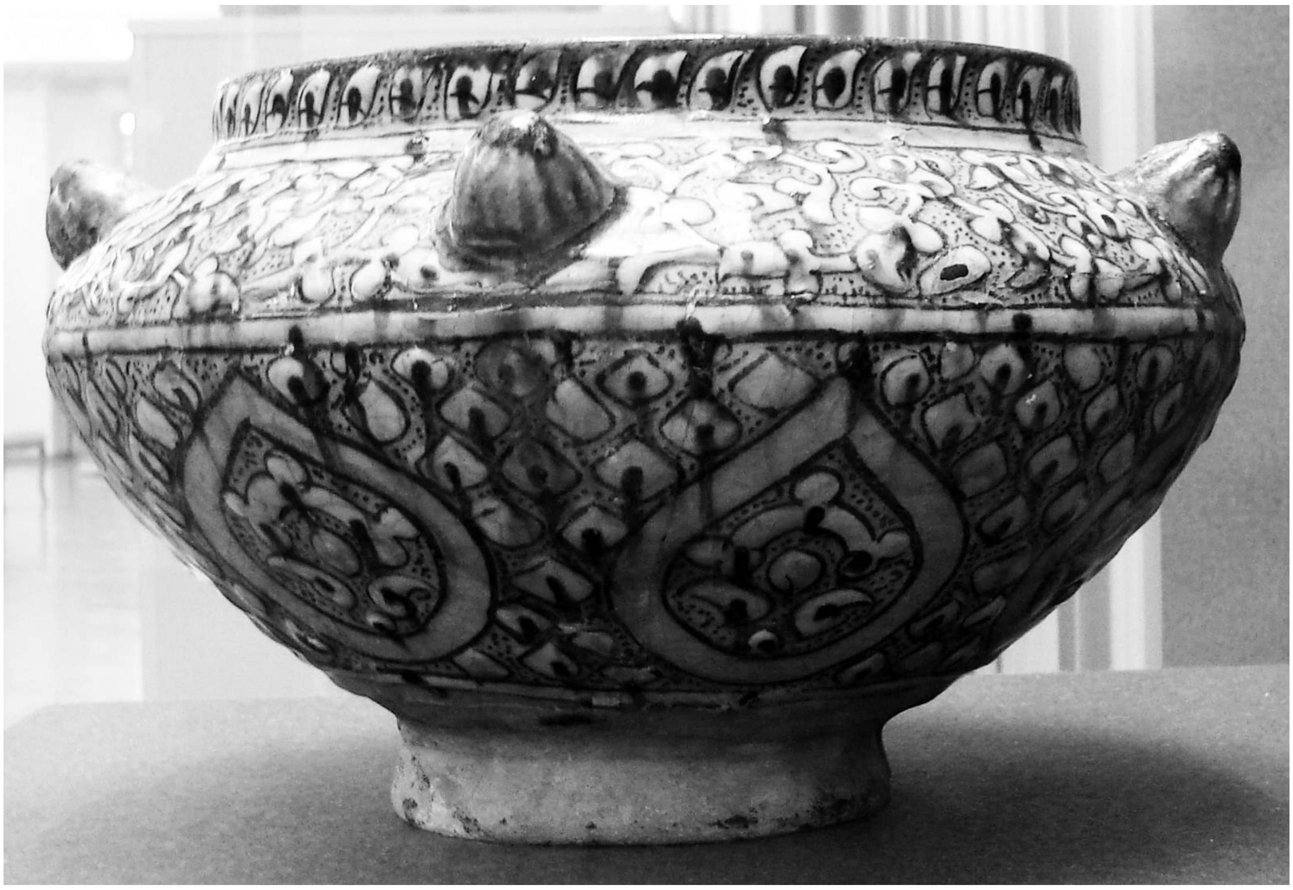

Figure 7. Golden Horde gyulabdan or 'rosewater bowl' decorated under glaze, and with slipped relief from the Azov Museum of Local Lore, inventory number KP25355/1 A1-468/1, diameter 30 cms.

figure 9, excavated at Stary Krym, are typical Golden Horde products; this feature is unknown in Iranian contexts.

A Golden Horde *lajvardina* variation is a polychrome enamelled series on a white ground. The stemcup, which is a very typical Mongol shape common to all areas and copied from bronze prototypes, was prominently displayed in the Kazan exhibition and on the cover of the catalogue.[41] Kramarovsky's catalogue entry gives it a Golden Horde or Syrian provenance, yet draws comparisons with Chinese Cizhou polychrome wares. However, the tile from Konya Urgench illustrated in figure 10 would indicate a possible Central Asian/ Khorezm provenance. There are also fragments of similar tiles from Mizdakhan on display in the Nukus Historical Museum.

Production Centres

So where were all these made? We have physical evidence from Fustat, Damascus, Sarai, and Kashan for the fourteenth century. Kilns have been excavated by the German team at Takht-i Sulayman, but the fourteenth-century material has not been published. Peter Morgan indicates in his doctoral thesis that the corpus was typical, and some profile drawings to which I have had access would agree with this.[42] According to internet reports from the Iranian Cultural Heritage News Agency, Iranian archaeologists have excavated more workshops recently from the late Ilkhanid period, but unfortunately have not presented any illustrations to indicate the types produced.[43]

The workshop area in the Ilkhanid city of Sultaniyya, near Zanjan, is well known but has yet to be excavated. Two examples of pottery produced there are in the Victoria and Albert and Ashmolean museums, sourced by David Talbot Rice and Gerald Reitlinger respectively, from a visit they made to the site in 1931. Talbot Rice published his bowl

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[41] Mark G. Kramarovsky, *The Golden Horde History and Culture* (St Petersburg: Hermitage Museum, 2005), p. 67, cat. no. 604.

[42] Peter H. Morgan, *Change and Continuity in Il-Khanid Iran: The Ceramic Evidence* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 2005), p. xiii; Dr A. Nippa's line drawings seen in Prof. Alastair Northedge's office at the Sorbonne, November 2004.

[43] See Maryam Tabeshian, 'Part of Takht-e Soleiman's Residential Area Discovered', *Cultural Heritage News Agency* [accessed 18 May 2011], http://www.chnpress.com/news/?Section=2&id=6708; but the implication is that these kilns were for manufacturing earthenware vessels and not composite-bodied wares. Tabeshian goes on to say: 'In addition to the clay vessels made by the inhabitants, a number of earthenware objects have also been found by archeologists in Takht-e Soleiman which were not made in the area and were imported from other cities such as Kashan and Kerman'.

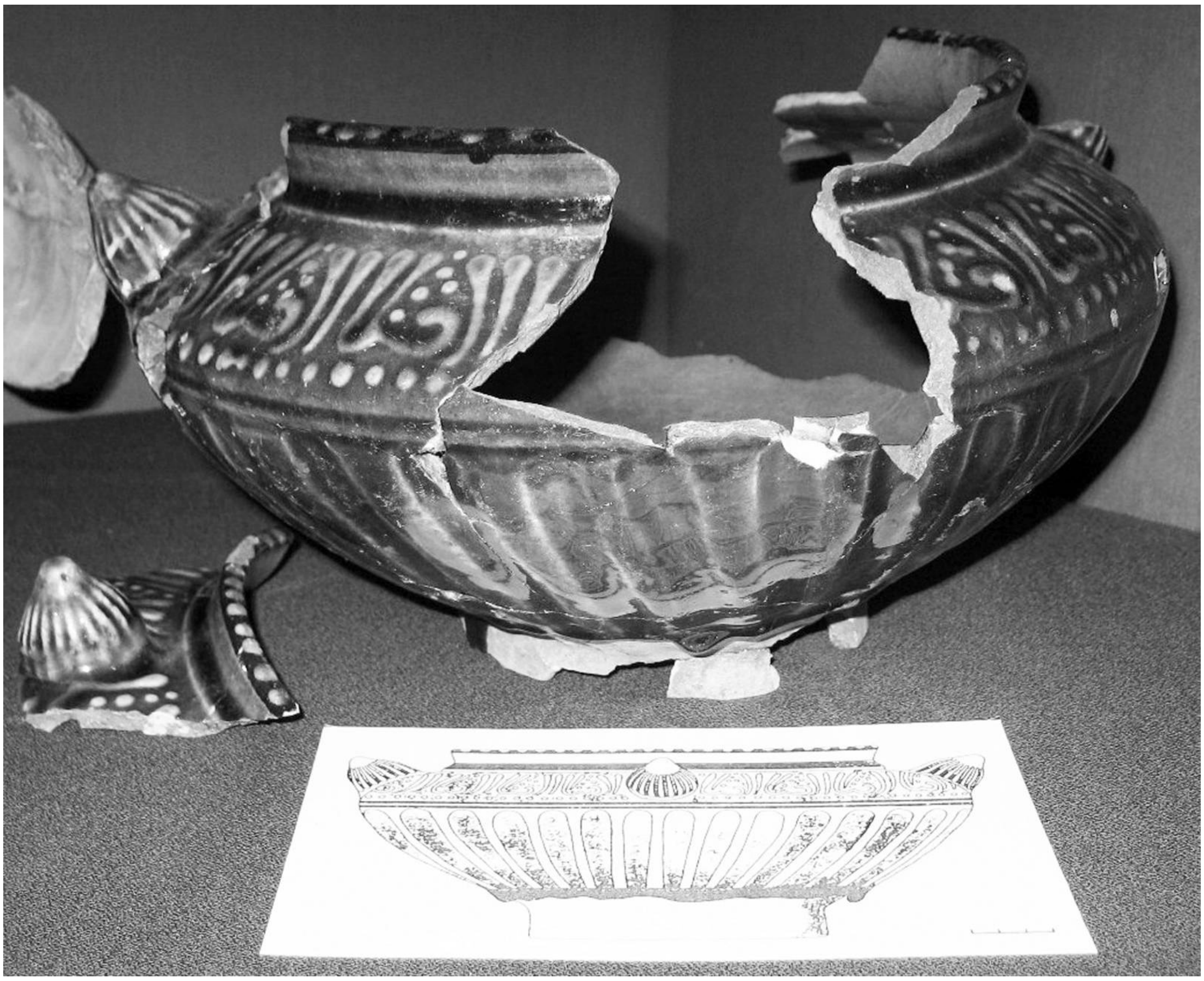

Figure 8. Golden Horde gyulabdan or 'rosewater bowl' excavated at Bilyar and now on display in the site museum. Image: Elena Barinova, Moscow.

in the *Burlington Magazine*,[44] and his estate gave it to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1972. Fortunately a few fragments remained with his son, Nick, who kindly made one available to me and Chris Doherty took a thin section and examined it under a x10 magnification microscope, confirming that it has a calcareous clay body with siliceous intrusions.

Interviews with Iranian archaeologists certainly indicate that there were kilns near Nishapur, Juvayn and Tus. All seem to agree that the underglaze-painted geometric wares were either made in the Juvayn area or Nishapur (fig. 11). Isfarayin, a site in Juvayn, north of Sabzavar, is reported to have plenty of evidence, but unfortunately I was not able to visit it. I was given the fragment illustrated in figure 12 in the Bojnurd Museum. The Nishapur fourteenth-century kilns reportedly lie under the present-day city, and at Tus there are plenty of kiln furniture fragments to be found on the surface, indicating pottery workshops which have yet to be excavated. Typically Tus ware is more floral. There is so much variety in quality and an abundance of earthenware copies that it is likely there was more than one workshop, and perhaps even multiple centres.

In Syria Robert Mason is pushing hard for Damascus to be the exclusive production centre come the fourteenth century, seemingly based on the petrographic analysis of one sherd, and a cobalt and lustre jar in the Kuwait National Museum (LNS 188C) with the inscription: 'Made for Asad al-Iskandarani, work of Yusuf in Damascus, decorated by A'. Marilyn Jenkins' earlier article published in *Muqarnas* indicates that there were three different body fabrics indicating the possibility of three different centres, one of which was Fustat;[45] however, we should not preclude a change in recipes over the years, so Mason could still be right. It must always be remembered that we are not discussing a luxury court ware; rather, in all probability, tableware for the military, merchant and administrative

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[44] David Talbot Rice, 'Some Wasters from Sultaniya', *Burlington Magazine*, 60 (1932), pp. 252–253.

[45] Jenkins, 'Mamluk underglaze-painted pottery'.

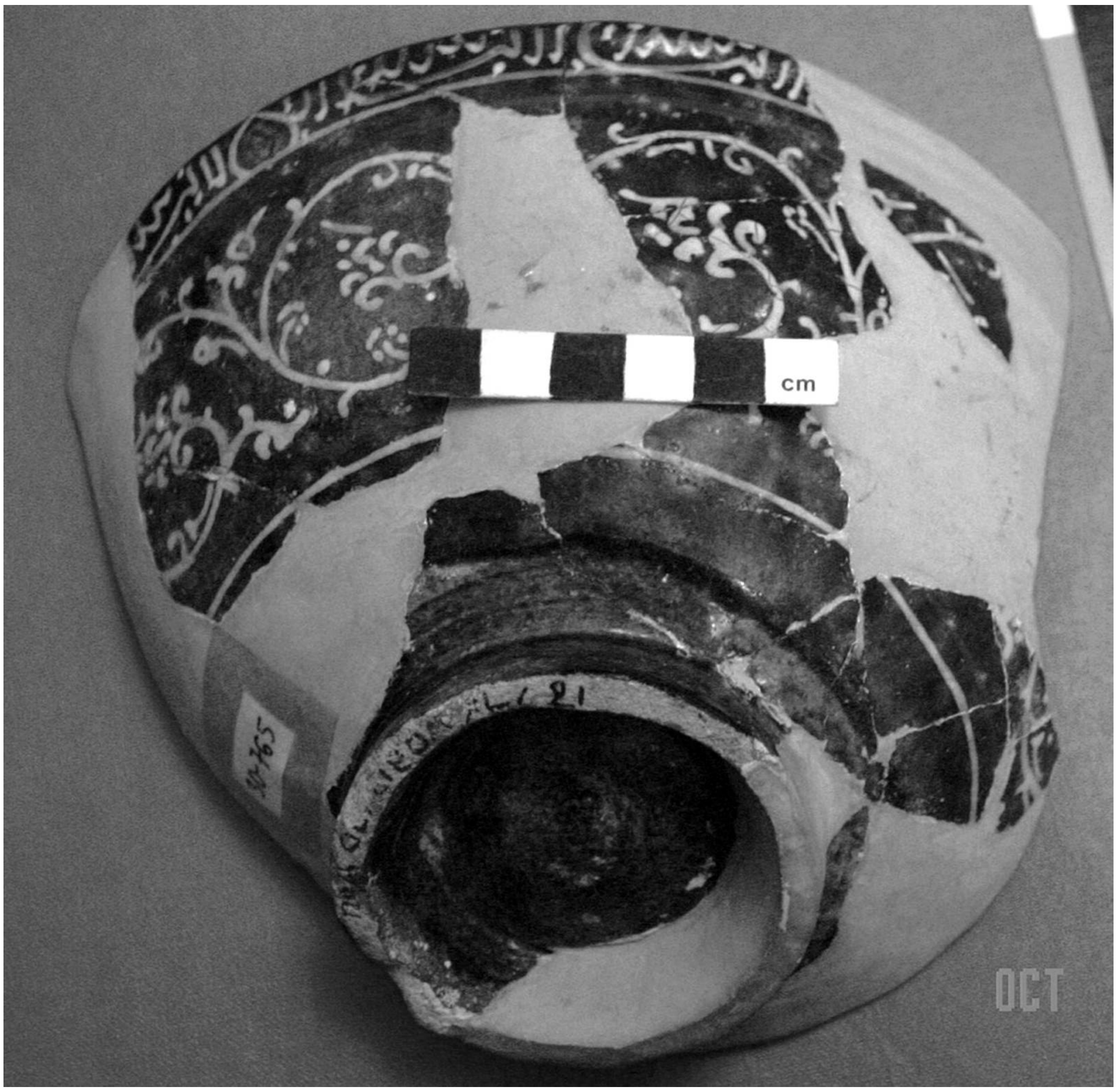

Figure 9. Lajvardina bowl with emerald green base excavated by Dr Mark G Kramarovsky at Stary Krym, the Crimea, Ukraine.

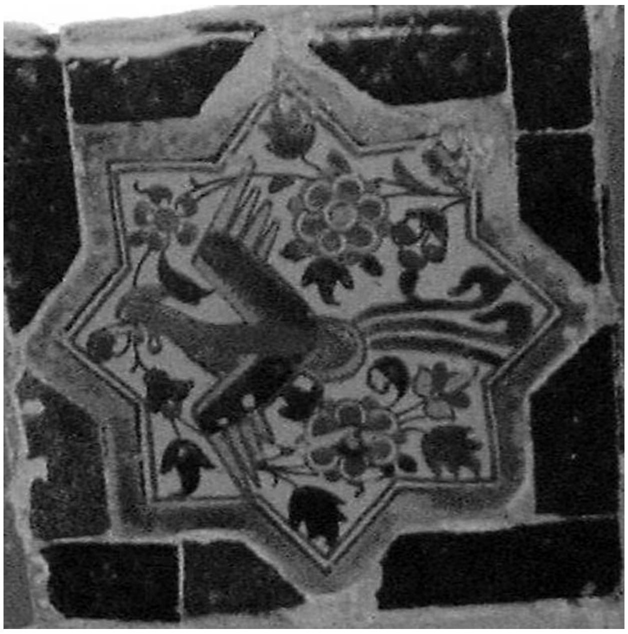

Figure 10. Polychrome tile in the Konya Urgench museum.

classes, and presentation containers for sweetmeats, nuts, and of course medicines.

Jacques Thiriot's work on the technology of the whole region, which includes the Western Mediterranean too, demonstrates considerable technical continuity in this area; and in Marseilles, where a whole pottery quarter dating to the thirteenth century was excavated, they have constructed a museum devoted to the topic.[46]

Conclusion

This is an all too brief excursion through this broad topic, but the aim was to give an outline of this complex subject. While an argument for differentiating by shape and decoration may not appear to be as scientific as technical

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[46] Jacques Thiriot, 'Matériaux pour un glossaire polyglotte des termes techniques relatives à l'atelier et au four de potier médiéval en Méditerranée', in Bakirtzis, *VIIe Congrès International*, pp. 263–284; figs 34–37 for illustrations of the reconstructed kiln in Marseilles, Sainte-Barbe.

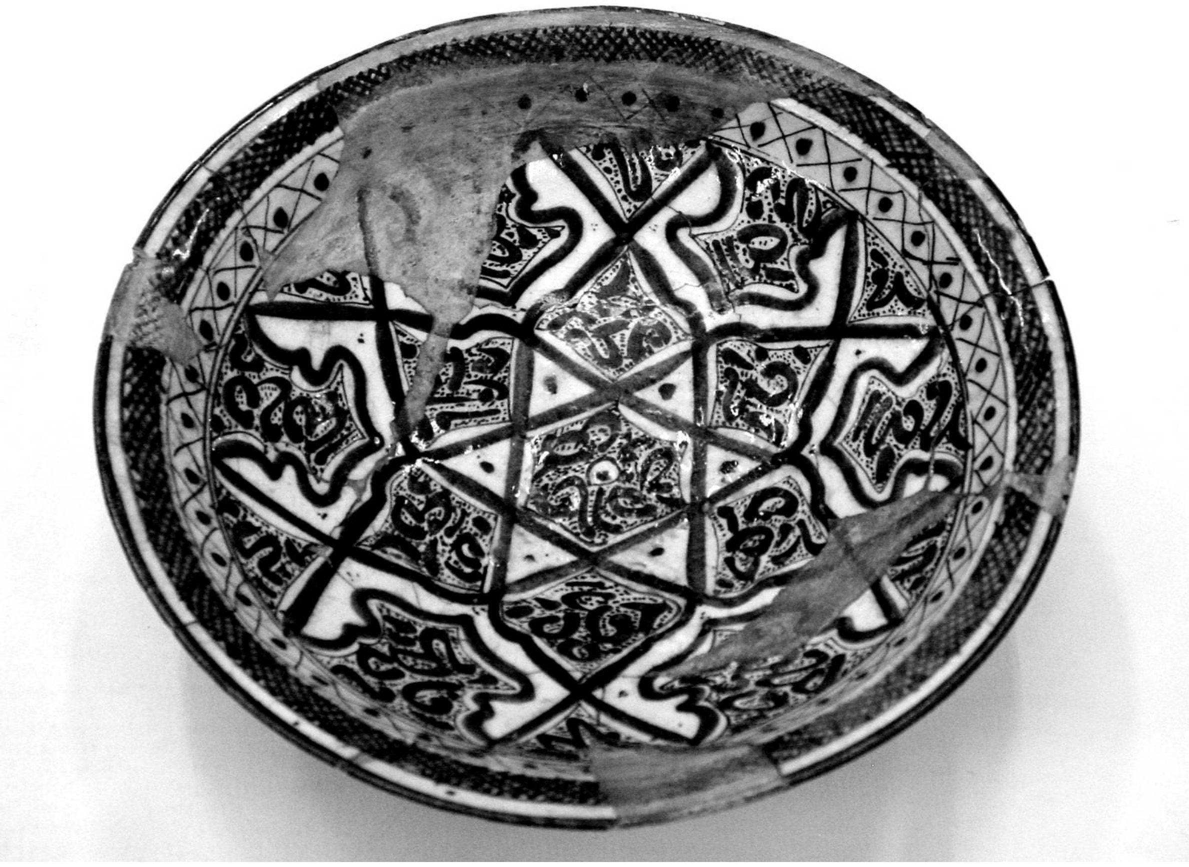

Figure 11. Geometric bowl from Khurasan in the Tehran Museum (#4457).

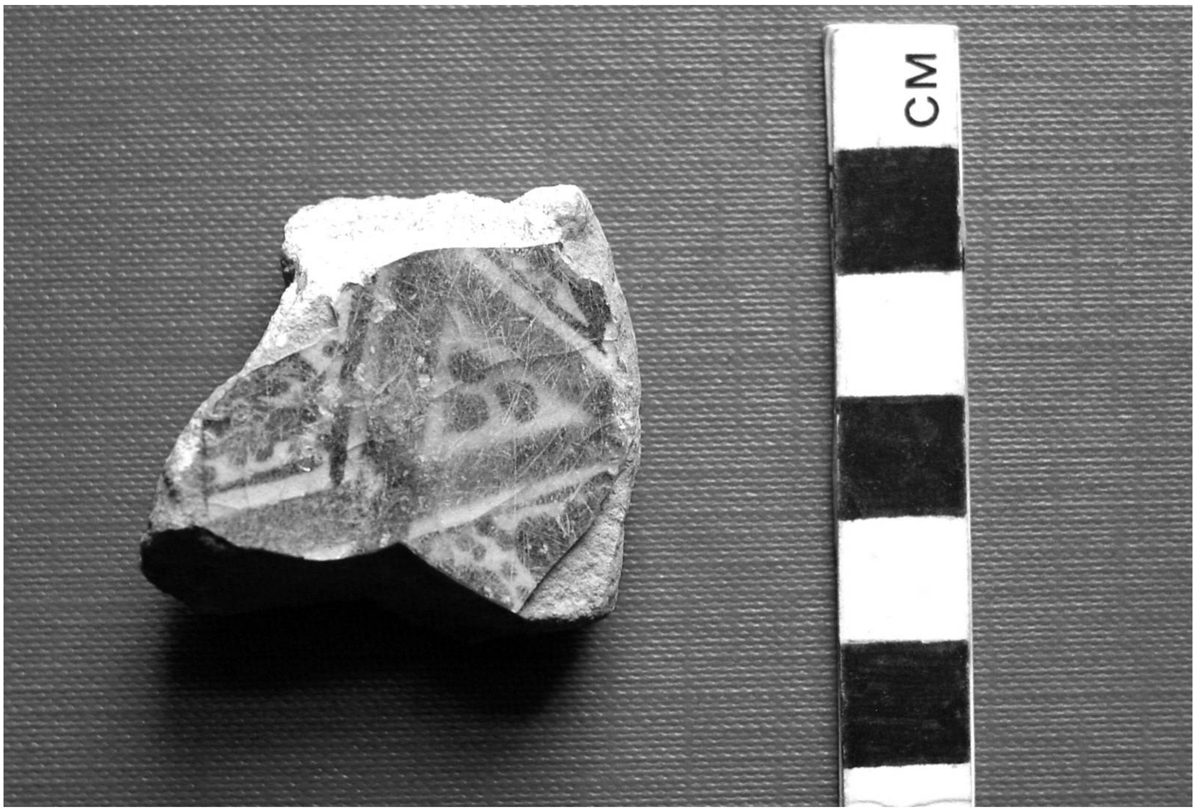

Figure 12. Isfarayin geometric bowl fragment with composite-siliceous paste body.

analyses of body composition, it should be noted that this is an archaeological approach and not an art-historical one. Ceramics are a tactile medium, and when distinguishing between common shapes we have to rely on decoration, weight and feel too. This may not be as scientific as chemical analysis, but until we have more unity and consistency in petrographic and glaze studies it is certainly better than museum labels inscribed with 'Syria or Iran' as a provenance. This study also aims to incorporate as many finds as possible.

CROSSING BORDERS: PATERNA CERAMICS IN *MUDÉJAR* SPAIN

Anna McSweeney

The subject of this paper is the decorated glazed tableware made in Paterna, a town five kilometres inland from Valencia on the east coast of Spain. Excavations have revealed two main production sites, where evidence including kiln sites, wheel pits, waster sherds and tools indicate that pottery was made from the early twelfth to the late fifteenth centuries.[1]

A large amount of undecorated earthenware, blue-and-white glazed ware and lustre-painted ceramics has also been found at these sites in Paterna,[2] but my focus is on the tin-glazed tableware decorated with copper green and manganese brown which was found at stratigraphic layers consistent with the early fourteenth century. This style of ceramic seems to have been made for a relatively short period of time during the first half of the fourteenth century. The confident and lively motifs of this distinctive ware demonstrate the mix of elements from both the Christian and Islamic worlds which co-existed in Paterna at this time (fig. 1).

This paper will examine the origins of the glazed ceramics industry in Paterna, looking at both documentary and archaeological evidence for production in the fourteenth century. It will discuss the Islamic origins of the techniques used to produce Paterna ware and argue that the opening up of new sources of tin in the fourteenth century acted as a stimulus to production for the industry in Paterna. Finally it will attempt to place Paterna ware within a wider Mediterranean context, in which there seems to have been a more widespread fashion for making tin-glazed tableware decorated with green and brown motifs during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The ceramics were made by *mudéjar* potters, who were those Muslims who stayed behind after the Christian conquest of Valencia in 1238 CE. Green-and-brown glazed ware was probably also made in Manises, a town very close to Paterna, but Paterna has been more extensively excavated and most of the material has been found at this site.[3] The *mudéjar* population of the Valencia region was allowed relative religious and economic freedom by its new Christian rulers during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[4] *Mudéjar* craftsmen were often allowed to continue practising their crafts after the conquests; indeed these craftsmen were often exempt from paying taxes to Christian lords or from completing compulsory military duties with Christian forces.[5] *Mudéjars* were particularly well known for their expertise in paper-making, carpentry and textile manufacture, as well as ceramics; the value of *mudéjar* craftsmanship is demonstrated in an edict from 1267 in which King James invited any Muslims coming to Valencia city to remain under his protection and to practise their crafts.[6] In Paterna, the *mudéjar* potters decorated their ceramics with a lively mixture of figurative, epigraphic, vegetal and geometric motifs in a style that can be described as neither entirely Islamic nor entirely Christian.

The Beginnings of Paterna Ware

Documentary and archaeological evidence provide the keys to understanding the development of tin-glazed ceramics in Paterna. The large amount of glazed material excavated at the two large sites of *Las Ollerías Mayores* and *Las Ollerías Menores* in Paterna indicates that a successful commercial enterprise developed during the fourteenth century. This is supported by the large quantity of surviving documents related to the ceramics industry that cluster around the early fourteenth century.[7] But this evidence also suggests that the origins of this industry can be traced to ceramic production under Muslim rule in Paterna.

Early documents from the archives of Valencia,[8] mostly contracts between potters and merchants, are invaluable for understanding the origins of the industry in Paterna. The

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[1] Mercedes Mesquida García (ed.), *Las Ollerías de Paterna. Tecnología y producción. Volumen 1 Siglos XII y XIII* (Paterna: Ayuntamiento de Paterna, Concejalía de Cultura, 2001).

[2] Mercedes Mesquida García, *La Cerámica de Paterna. Reflejos del Mediterráneo* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2002).

[3] Large collections of Paterna green-and-brown ware are held at the Museu Municipal de Cerámica de Paterna in Paterna, at the Museu Nacional de Cerámica y Artes Suntuarias 'González Martí' in Valencia, at the Museu de Cerámica in Barcelona and the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.

[4] Robert Ignatius Burns, *Islam under the Crusaders: Colonial Survival in the Thirteenth-century Kingdom of Valencia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973) p. 10.

[5] Robert Ignatius Burns, *Medieval Colonialism: Postcrusade Exploitation of Islamic Valencia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 338.

[6] Burns, *Islam Under the Crusaders*, p. 90. Reference to 'Fori regni Valentiae'; Monzon 1548 lib.1 rub. VIII c.2.

[7] Pedro José López Elum, *Los Orígenes de la Cerámica de Manises y de Paterna (1285 – 1335)* (Valencia: Els Arcs, 1984), p. 303. See also Guillermo J. de Osma, *Apuntes sobre cerámica morisca. Textos y documentos. Los maestros alfareros de Manises, Paterna y Valencia. Contratos y ordenanzas de los siglos XIV, XV y XVI* (Madrid: Fortanet, 1923), and Marçal Olivar Daydí, *La cerámica trecentista de los países de la Corona de Aragón* (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1952).

[8] Archivo del Reino de Valencia (Protocolos Notariales), Valencia, henceforth referred to as ARV.

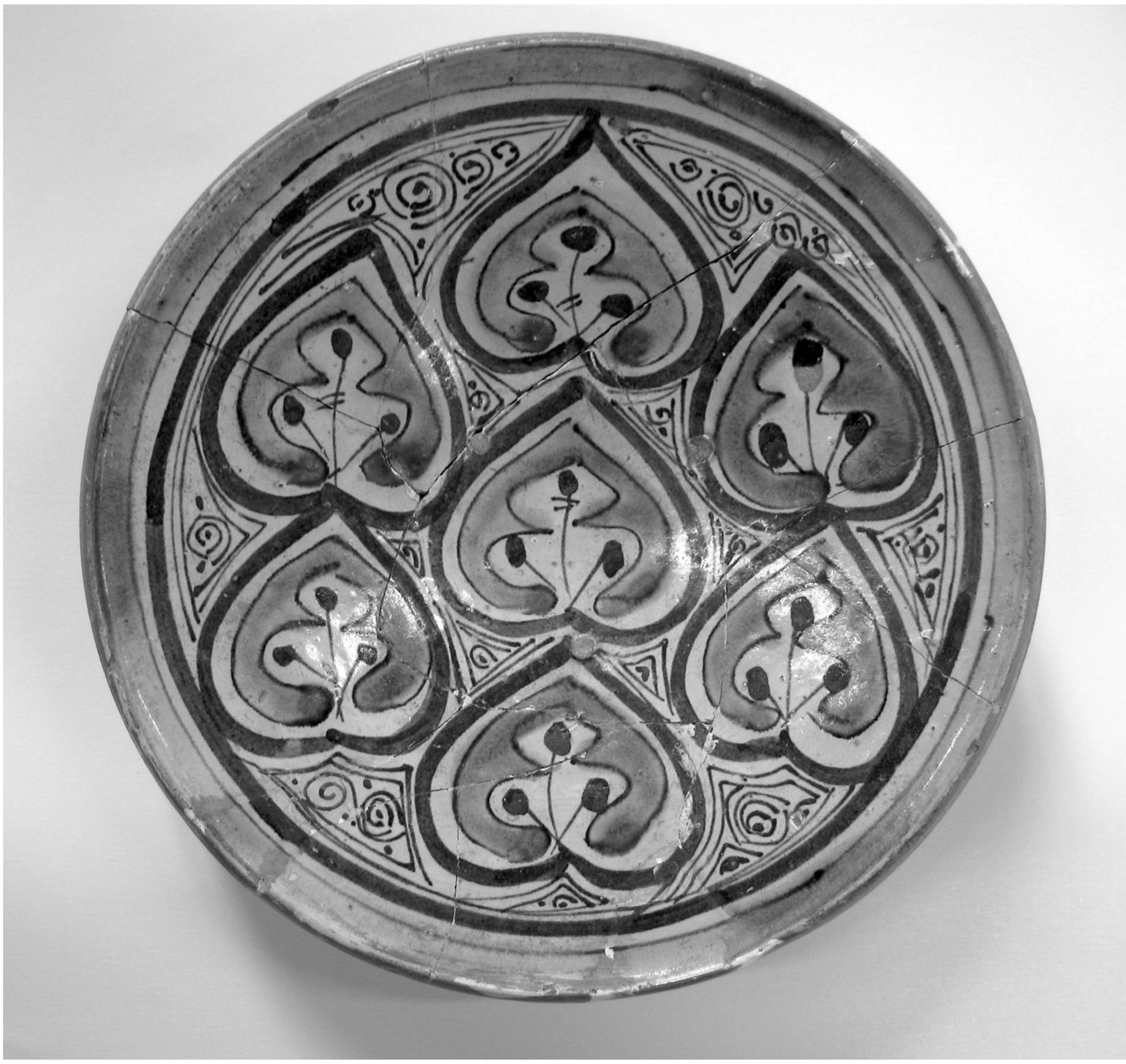

Figure 1. Bowl, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with motifs in copper green and manganese brown. Paterna, fourteenth century. Diam. 24.5 cm; inv. ALM 11. Museu Municipal de Ceràmica de Paterna, Paterna.

earliest reference to pottery produced in Paterna consists of a sales contract dated 26 October 1285.[9] The text reads:

> *[E]go, Mafomet*[10] *Algebha, sarracenus Paterne, confiteor me debere vobis, Arnaldo de Castellaria, [filio] condam Peregrini de Castellaria, et vestris, centum al[f]ollas ad opus olley, ad unum pretium, bonas, sinceras et bene coctas, transferte intus in domo vestra dehinc ad m[e]ns[e]m proximum venturum, pret[i]um quorum iam a vobis habui et recepi, etc., scilicet V solidos [re]gallium. Testes sunt inde, Dominicus de Sarion, cursor, Jucef, filius Bagenati, sarracenus, et Caççim, filius Vidrieri ac filius d'Almellarii Paterne.*[11]

I, Mahomet Algebha, Muslim of Paterna, owe Arnaldo de Castellaria, son of the late Peregrini de Castellaria, one hundred large jars, for containing oil, at one price, good, true and well fired, which will be delivered to his house in Valencia during

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[9] López Elum, *Los Orígenes de la Cerámica*, pp. 69–71.

[10] The handwritten text reads 'Mafomet', but it is translated by Pedro José López Elum as 'Mahomet' (*La alquería islámica en Valencia. Estudio arqueológico de Bofilla, siglos XI á XIV* [Valencia: n.p., 1994], p. 69). This is curious, but can be understood when one looks at other Catalan words of Arabic origin (see Federico Corriente, 'Arabismos del Catalán y otras voces de origen Semítico o Medio-Oriental' *Estudios de Dialectología Norteafricana y Andalusí*, 2 (Zaragoza: Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo, 1997), p. 14; for example, the Catalan *alfaig* meaning a Muslim pilgrim, from the Arabic *al-hajj*.

[11] ARV, *Prot.*, Guerau Molere, 2900, fol. 48. Transcribed by López Elum, *Los Orígenes de la Cerámica*, p. 69.

> the month of December, and for which he has received five *sueldos.* Witnessed by Dominicus de Sarion, messenger, Jucef, son of Bagenati, Muslim, and Caççim, son of Vidrieri and son of Almellarii Paterne.[12]

The document indicates that by this date, 1285, a potter in Paterna was producing ceramic container vessels to order for commercial sale. The potter is clearly a Muslim, as stated in the document and indicated by his name, while the name of the contractor (Arnaldo de Castellaria) indicates he is a Christian.

It is useful to look at the first fifteen contracts in the Valencia archives that refer to Paterna, dating from 1285 to 1326. These contracts all include the names of the potters and the merchants who were buying the pots. All the merchants are Christians, or we can at least surmise this from their names (such as 'Vitali Ferrer' from 1317), and from the fact that their witnesses were Christians. Twelve out of the fifteen potters were *mudéjar* potters, while one contract was signed by both a Christian and a *mudéjar* (the Christian is identified as a merchant, not a potter), and the two remaining contracts were signed by pairs of Christian potters.[13]

As is customary in these contracts, when a Muslim and a Christian were involved, it was counter-signed by both Muslim and Christian witnesses. The 1285 contract is witnessed by Dominicus de Sarion, a Christian, and Jucef and Caççim, both Muslims. When contracts were drawn up only between Christians, however, such as a contract dated 1319 from Manises, they were witnessed only by Christians.

The fact that the *mudéjar* potters signed their own contracts indicates that they were in control of their own industry – that is to say, they were not working directly under or for a Christian patron. While the buyers and distributors of the pots were Christian merchants in Valencia, *mudéjar* merchants were involved in the commercialisation of their products from Paterna.

The capacity to produce one hundred large vessels for the following month indicates that the potters had mastered the necessary technical skills to make and fire large vessels to order. The quantity of ceramics ordered in the contract suggests an established market demand in Valencia and the existence of significant infrastructure in Paterna, sufficient to support a workshop large enough to make and store these one hundred pots and the skilled potters able to make them. This structure implies that although this 1285 document is the earliest pertaining to Paterna, a ceramic workshop was already established before this date.

However, these contracts do not specifically mention green-and-brown, tin-glazed ware. The vessels referred to in the earliest contract, dated 1285, were undecorated; indeed the vessels were probably unglazed, although sometimes storage jars were covered with a layer of pitch to make them impermeable. Specific descriptions of decorated glazed green-and-brown ware are noticeably absent from these earliest documents. It is not clear when pottery of this type began to be produced.[14] Contracts from Paterna and Manises dated to the 1320s sometimes refer to *opus terre alba et picte* ('white and decorated earthenware'; 1325), *opus picte* ('decorated ware') and *opus terre picte consimilis operi maleche* ('decorated ware similar to Malaga ware'; 1325), terms which could describe green-and-brown ware.[15]

As the surviving documentary evidence is inconclusive we have to look outside of Paterna, to archaeological material, in order to establish the date of production of glazed green-and-brown ware. Excavations at the town of Torre Bofilla, north west of Paterna, are important because green-and-brown glazed ware was found at a stratigraphic level consistent with an early- to mid-fourteenth century date, and not before.[16] Torre Bofilla was depopulated by 1357, giving a useful *terminus ante quem* for this type of ceramic. The earliest excavations at the production sites in Paterna itself were undocumented. Manuel González Martí noted his first discovery of the ceramics in the ground at Paterna in August 1907.[17] Subsequent excavations undertaken by the Valencian antiquarians José Almenar, Vicente Gómez Novella and Vicente Petit left no records (published or unpublished) of their finds. Mercedes Mesquida García began excavating at Paterna in the 1980s, and her results have been published.[18] While she would argue for a thirteenth-century date for green-and-brown ware, the archaeological evidence is not conclusive; the early fourteenth century is more likely when the material evidence is examined together with documentary material.

Tin-Glaze Technique

The technique of tin-glazing allows the potter to apply a bright, white base glaze on top of the earthenware clay, onto which decorative motifs could be applied using pigments like cobalt, copper and manganese. The technique was discovered in ninth-century Iraq,[19] and by the following century had found its way to Fatimid Egypt and Umayyad al-Andalus. While tin-glazing was used in Islamic Spain from at least the tenth century, it was in Paterna that the technique was used on a large scale for the first time in the early fourteenth century.

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[12] Latin to Spanish translation by López Elum; translation from Spanish to English by the author.

[13] López Elum, *Los Orígenes de la Cerámica*, p. 73.

[14] Mesquida García, *Las Ollerías de Paterna*, pp. 167–224. Mesquida argues that the glazed green-and-brown ware was made in Paterna from the thirteenth century. However, I would agree with López Elum that the lack of documentary and archaeological evidence for this early date suggest that the early fourteenth century would be more appropriate.

[15] López Elum, *Los Orígenes de la Cerámica*, p. 34.

[16] López Elum, *La alquería islámica*, p. 303.

[17] Manuel González Martí, *Cerámica del Levante Español: Siglos medievales Tomo I, Loza* (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, S.A., 1944).

[18] Mesquida García, *Las Ollerías de Paterna*.

[19] Robert B. Mason and Michael S. Tite, 'The Beginnings of Tin-Opacification of Pottery Glazes', *Archaeometry*, 39/1 (1997), pp. 49–50.

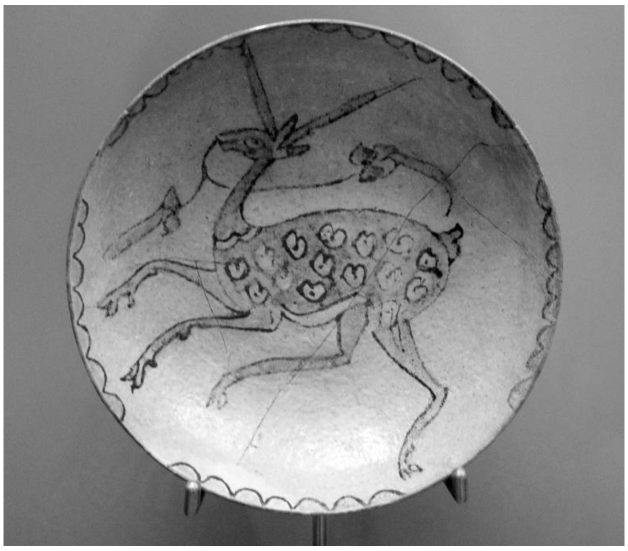

Figure 2. Bowl, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with stag motif in copper green and manganese brown. Valencia, late tenth – early eleventh century. Diam. 24.4 cm; inv. 1/2858. Museu Nacional de Cerámica y Artes Suntuarias 'González Martí', Valencia.

The earliest tin-glazed wares in al-Andalus are the green- and manganese-glazed ceramics excavated on the site of the tenth-century palace-city of Madinat al-Zahra in Córdoba. Previously described as slip-painted ware, analysis has confirmed that they were glazed with a lead glaze in which tin was used as the opacifying agent.[20] Ceramics made in the region of Valencia from the late tenth century indicate that this glazing technique soon spread across al-Andalus (fig. 2).[21]

Tin glaze was used in the *bacini* from Mallorca that were embedded in the façades of Pisan churches in the eleventh century,[22] and in lustre-painted ceramics from Malaga. It was this Islamic technique that was adopted by the Paterna potters in the fourteenth century for their ceramics. Tests carried out on the ceramics from Paterna have shown that similar quantities of tin oxide were used in the glazes at Paterna as were used in the tin-glazed ceramics from Madinat al-Zahra, indicating that the glaze recipes were closely related.[23]

However, while the caliphal bowls and plates of tenth-century al-Andalus and the eleventh-century *bacini* made in Mallorca and al-Andalus were glazed on both the interior and exterior surfaces (usually using a transparent lead glaze on the exterior),[24] Paterna ceramics (which mostly consist of open forms such as bowls and plates) were glazed only on the interior surfaces, leaving the exterior unglazed. The Paterna bowl illustrated in figures 3 and 4 shows the glazed interior, with pseudo-Arabic inscriptions encircling an image of a bird with a tree, and the exterior, which is unglazed. This distinction between Paterna ware and caliphal and *ta'ifa* period pieces is important. The glazing of both interior and exterior surfaces suggests that greater investment was made in the earlier green-and-brown ceramics when compared with the single-surface glazing of Paterna ware. While it is important to glaze the interior surface of a bowl for both hygienic and decorative reasons, the exterior surface does not need to be glazed, and money and time would be saved by leaving it unglazed. The volume of Paterna green-and-brown ware which survives today in public collections in Spain suggests that it was made in large, commercial-scale quantities. It would have been quicker and cheaper for the potters to leave the exteriors of their open-form ceramics unglazed, instead focusing on the interior surfaces that they filled with such lively, animated motifs.

The large-scale use of tin glaze in the fourteenth century can be explained in part by trade patterns that increased the supply of the raw material tin, the essential ingredient that was used to make the glazes opaque. Islamic Spain developed its mining and metallurgical resources to a sophisticated level,[25] but tin (or cassiterite as the mined ore is called) remained elusive. Although there are extensive tin resources in Galicia in the northwest of the Iberian peninsula, these appear to have been less than intensively exploited during the Muslim period, following the exhaustion of the surface tin by the Romans by the third century CE.[26]

By the thirteenth century however, tin mined in southwest England, particularly Cornwall, began to be traded on a larger scale than ever before.[27] Traded through Flanders, it was brought south via the Atlantic to the Mediterranean by Italian merchants on large galleys. Customs accounts from the fourteenth century show that Italian merchants were responsible for most of the bulk export of tin from the English ports of London and Southampton as well as through smaller ports in the southwest of England.[28] Tin was sent to Italy through river and sea routes; in 1412 the Venetian Senate decreed the fitting out of four galley ships for the trading of tin with London.[29] The statute of 1378 allowed merchants from Catalonia, Aragon, Venice and Genoa as well as other kingdoms to export tin (also wool,

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[20] José Escudero Aranda, 'La cerámica decorada en "Verde y Manganeso" de Madinat al Zahra', *Cuadernos de Madinat al Zahra*, 1 (1987), p. 135.

[21] Maria Paz Soler Ferrer, 'Catalogue entry no. 29', in Jerrilynn D. Dodds (ed.), *Al-Andalus: the Art of Islamic Spain*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), p. 236.

[22] Graziella Berti and Tiziano Mannoni, 'Cerámiques de l'Andalousie décorées en "verde y manganeso" parmi les "bacini" de Pise de la fin du Xe siècle,' in *La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée: Actes du 6e congrès* (Aix en Provence: Narration, 1997), p. 435.

[23] Judit Molera Marimon, Trinitat Pradell Cara, Mercedes Mesquida, and Mario Vendrell Saz, 'Características Tècnicas y Procesos de Producción de las Cerámicas del S.XIII en Paterna' in Mesquida García, *Las Ollerías de Paterna*, pp. 235–261. See in particular p. 249, re glazes.

[24] Berti and Mannoni, 'Céramique de l'Andalouisie décorées', p. 435.

[25] Alberto Canto García and Patrice Cressier (eds), *Minas y metalurgia en al-Andalus y Magreb occidental: Explotación y poblamiento* (Madrid: Casa de Velazquez, 2008).

[26] Ernest S. Hedges, *Tin in Social and Economic History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), p. 10.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 16.

[28] John Hatcher, *English Tin Production and Trade before 1550* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 92.

[29] Hedges, *Tin in Social and Economic History*, p. 16.

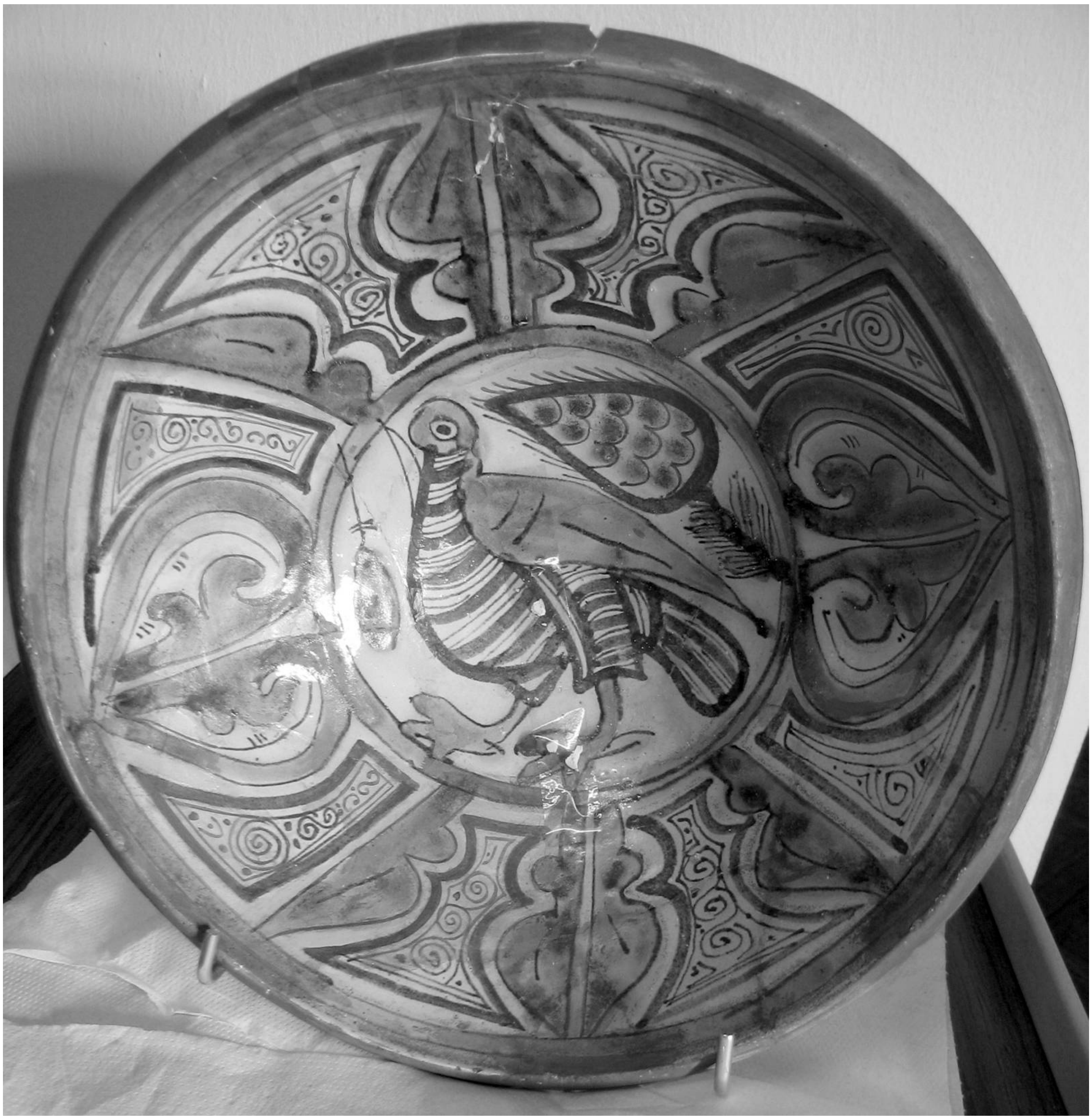

Figure 3. Bowl, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with copper green and manganese brown. Paterna, fourteenth century. Diam. 29.5 cm; inv. 20089 Museu de Ceràmica, Barcelona.

lead and other goods) directly from English ports if they took them to destinations east of Calais.[30] According to customs accounts from Southampton, between 1379 and 1438 an average of two hundred thousandweight of tin and pewter was exported from the port each year, ninety percent of which was handled by Genoese and Catalan merchants.[31]

The potters in Paterna would have had much easier access than ever before to large quantities of tin via the merchants at the port of Valencia. Documentary evidence from the archives of Valencia suggests that the potters of Manises and Paterna were often paid in kind with tin – as well as with other materials such as textiles, cobalt and lead – by Valencian merchants purchasing pottery. A 1325 contract documents an agreement between Mahomet Bensuleyman and another 'saracen' from Manises, which promises to deliver to Doña Raimunda of Valencia their year's production of glazed pottery, and stipulates the receipt of payment in advance in the form of lead and tin.[32]

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[30] Hatcher, *English Tin Production*, p. 97.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[32] 1403 Archivo del Colegio del Patriarca, Valencia, archives of 1403, published in Guillermo J. Osma, *Adiciones a los Textos y Documentos Valenciano, II: Maestros Alfareros de Manises, Paterna y Valencia* (Madrid: Fortanet, 1911), p. 18.

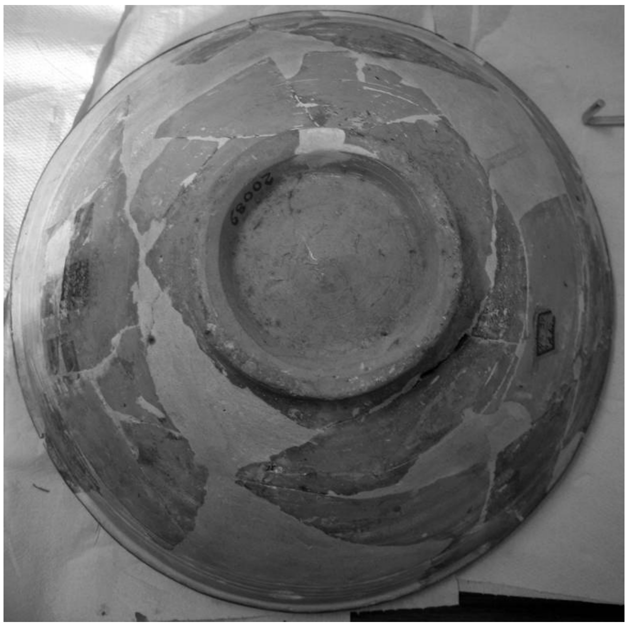

Figure 4. Reverse of figure 3. Bowl, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with copper green and manganese brown. Paterna, fourteenth century. Diam. 29.5 cm; inv. 20089. Museu de Ceràmica, Barcelona.

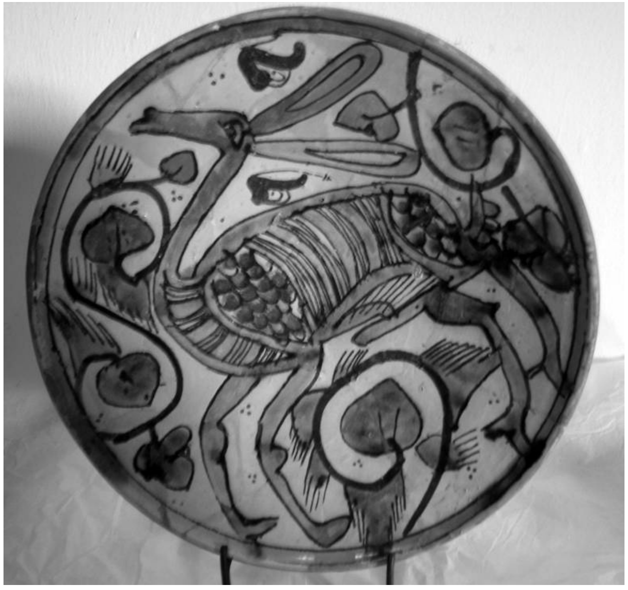

Figure 5. Bowl, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with deer motif in copper green and manganese brown. Paterna, fourteenth century. Diam. 23 cm; inv. 44773. Museu de Ceràmica, Barcelona.

This new trading pattern in western Europe would have had a profound effect on the style of pottery made in Paterna. Easy access to tin would have allowed the potters to make larger quantities of glazed ceramics than ever before, supplying a new demand for ceramic tableware in fourteenth-century Europe.[33]

Stylistic Influences

To some extent the Paterna green-and-brown ware continued a ceramic tradition which flourished under Muslim rule in al-Andalus: that of tin-glazed open forms with a centrally placed decorative motif, often an animal, a figure or an epigraphic motif, executed in copper green and manganese brown. The ceramics found at Madinat al-Zahra[34] and elsewhere in al-Andalus, such as a dish from tenth- to eleventh-century Valencia decorated with the image of a deer[35] (fig. 2), demonstrate the origins and continuation of this tradition in al-Andalus. It seems evident that Paterna ware is fundamentally connected with the tin-glazed ware of Madinat al-Zahra in terms of technique and use of colour (fig. 5).[36]

But green-and-brown ceramics continued to be made across the western Mediterranean in the centuries before Paterna ware. In North Africa the technique of tin-glazed earthenware painted with green and brown arrived sometime between the ninth and tenth centuries, particularly at Sabra Mansuriyya and Raqqada near Kairouan, and persisted in Tunis until the late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries.[37] Similarly, at the Qal‘a of the Banu Hammad, the fortress capital of the Hammadids, this type of ceramic was produced during the eleventh century.[38]

A century before the beginning of green-and-brown ceramics in Paterna, similar ceramics using the same tin-glazed technique and distinctive colouring were made in various centres across the western Mediterranean, including Marseilles, Sicily and Pisa. These ceramics were made using Islamic techniques and colour types, influenced by imports from North Africa and Spain, and even the Near East.[39]

The fact that Paterna green-and-brown ware developed in

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[33] See Anna McSweeney, ‘The Tin Trade and Medieval Ceramics: Tracing the Sources of Tin and its Influence on Mediterranean Ceramics Production’, *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, 23/3 (2011), pp. 155–169.

[34] Carlos Cano Piedra, *La Cerámica Verde-Manganeso de Madinat al Zahra* (Granada: El Legado Andalusí, 1995).

[35] See catalogue no. 29 in Dodds, *Al-Andalus*, p. 236.

[36] In 1925, Ernst Kühnel suggested that a direct link might be made between the tin-glazed green-and-brown ceramics made in caliphal and *ta'ifa* al-Andalus and Paterna ware. He argued that although several centuries separated the productions, future archaeological finds might bridge this chronological gap. Ernst Kühnel, ‘Keramik von Paterna’, *Berliner Museen,* 46/4 (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1925), pp. 37–40. A survey of tin-glazed green-and-brown ware from the wider Mediterranean region suggests that this gap may in fact have been bridged by continuous traditions of the technique in workshops not only within the Iberian Peninsula, but across the Mediterranean littoral.

[37] Abdelaziz Daoulatli, ‘La production vert et brun en Tunisie du IXe au XIIe siècle’, in *Le vert et le brun: de Kairouan à Avignon, céramiques du Xe au XVe siècle* (Marseilles: Musée de Marseille, 1995), pp. 69–89. See nos. 56, 57 and 58 for examples from twelfth-century Tunisia.

[38] Marie-France Vivier, ‘La Qal’a des Beni-Hammad’, in *Le vert et le brun*, pp. 90–93.

[39] See *Le vert et le brun*.

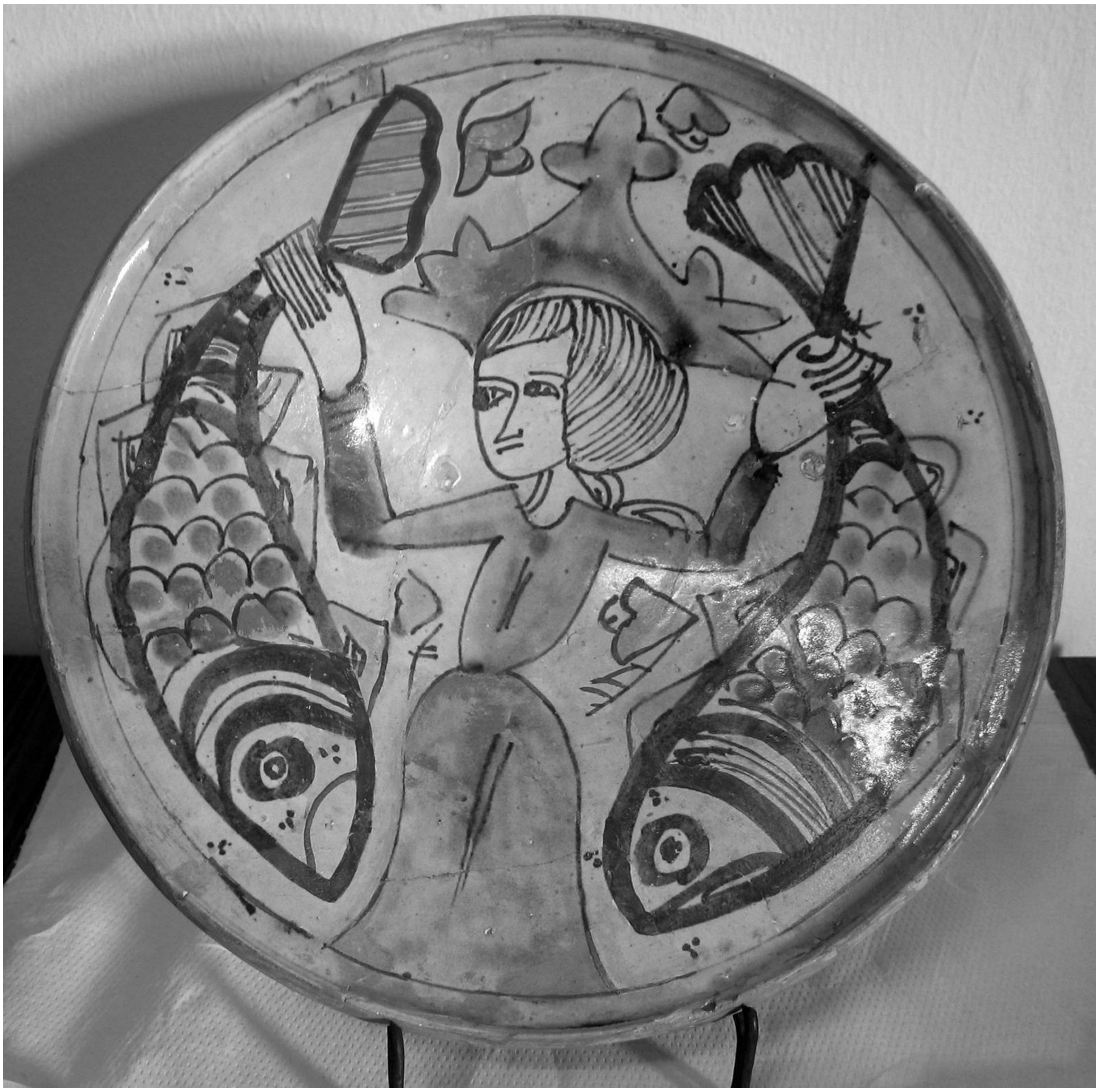

Figure 6. Plate, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with copper green and manganese brown. Paterna, fourteenth century. Diam. 23 cm; inv. 20047. Museu de Ceràmica, Barcelona.

the early fourteenth century in Valencia, a newly Christian city in a flourishing western Mediterranean economy attracting Italian traders from the emerging powers of Pisa and Genoa as well as merchants from southern France and Catalonia, suggests that contacts with the Christian world may also have had a significant influence on the industry.

Sicily began producing tin-glazed green-and-brown ware of a type known as 'Gela ware' during the early thirteenth century, probably influenced by its close ties with Tunisia and North Africa.[40] Like Paterna ware, Gela ware is glazed only on the interior surfaces and decorated with a variety of motifs. However, Gela ware uses not only green and brown but also blue and yellow colours, with motifs including fish, birds and pairs of fish, which are also commonly found in Paterna ware.[41]

Excavations of workshops such as that of Sainte-Barbe in Marseilles,[42] as well as of ceramics in Montpelier and the

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[40] Allesandra Molinari, 'L'Italie du Sud', in *Le vert et le brun*, pp. 119–125. See no. 109, p. 125, for a thirteenth-century piece on a white tin glazed base.

[41] Graziella Berti and Sauro Gelichi, 'Mille chemins ouverts en Italie', in *Le vert et le brun*, pp. 128–163. See nos 131–135, p. 159.

[42] Henri Marchesi and Jacques Thiriot, *Marseille: Les ateliers de potiers du XIIIe siècle et le quartier Sainte-Barbe, Ve-XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1997).

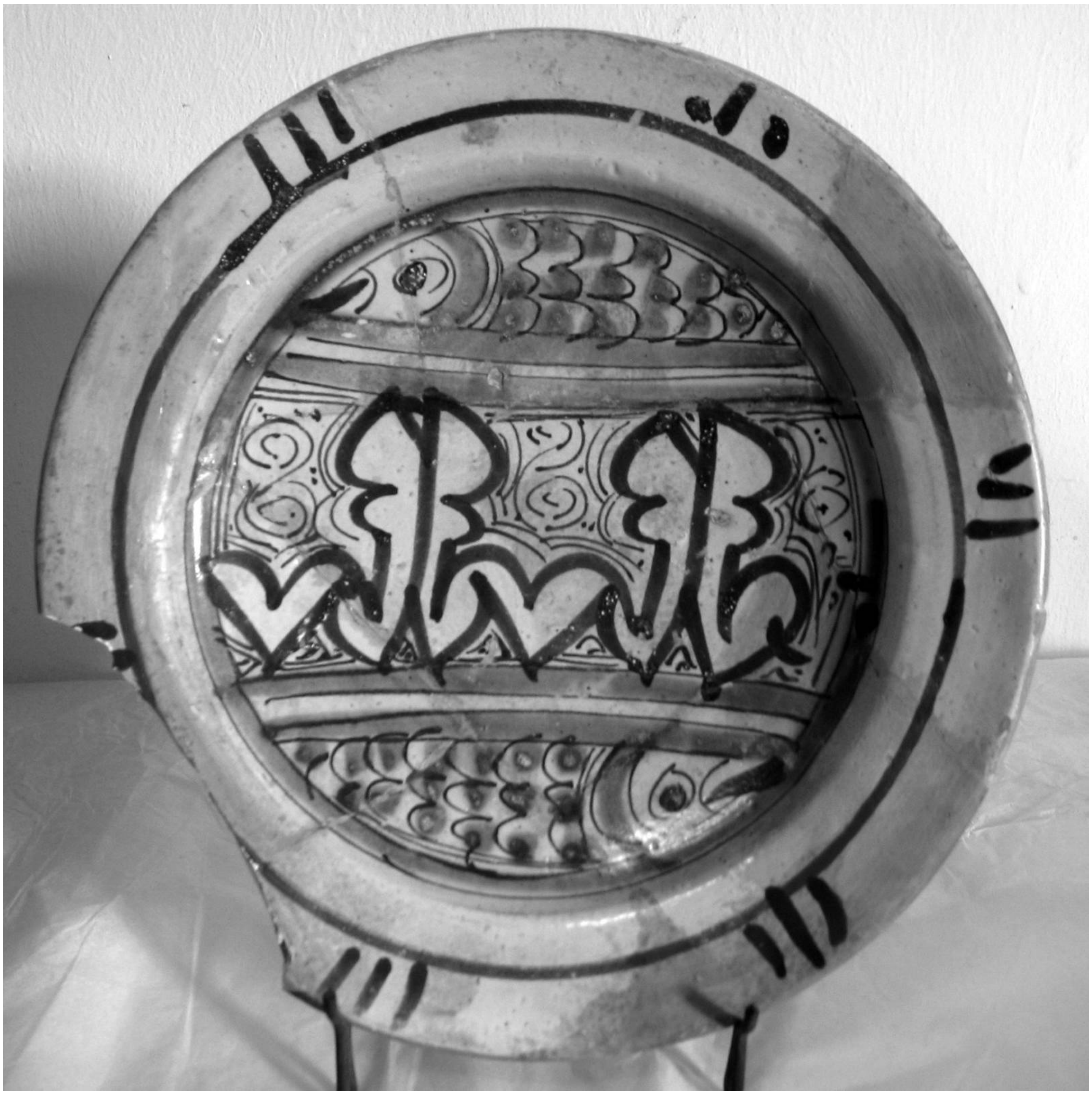

Figure 7. Plate, ceramic with tin glaze decorated with copper green and manganese brown. Paterna, fourteenth century. Diam.20.5 cm; inv. 19284. Museu de Ceràmica, Barcelona.

Valle del Ródano,[43] illustrate that by the thirteenth century tin-glazed green-and-brown ware was also being made in southern France. During the thirteenth century the coast of southern France, particularly Marseilles, had established and maintained close commercial contacts with Mediterranean coastal cities. It was particularly connected with the cities of the Crusades, but these contacts extended to Cyprus, Alexandria, Ceuta, Tripoli, Bougie and Byzantium. In 1253 Marseilles kept trading inns (*funduqs*) in all of these cities as well as in Tunis, Oran, Tenès and Tlemcen, and subsequently established links with the Balearics and the east coast of Spain. This led to substantial importations to southern France of ceramics from those regions, as well as catalysing the beginning of green-and-brown tin-glazed ware production in southern France by the end of the thirteenth century. The kilns excavated at Sainte-Barbe are of a type previously unknown in Provence, which further supports the theory that these ceramic techniques were imported into the region.[44]

Commercial activity in the Mediterranean during the thirteenth century was intense and complex.[45] For this reason, Javier Martí and Josefa Pascual argue that the Paterna workshop flourished in part because of its proximity to the port of Valencia, a well-organised market and prosperous locale, rather than its success resting solely on the acquisition of the technical ability to make this type of tin-glazed ceramic.[46]

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[43] Henri Amouric, Gabrielle Démians d'Archimbaud, and Lucy Vallauri, 'De Marseille au Languedoc et au Comtat Venaissin: les chemins du vert et du brun', in *Le vert et le brun*, pp. 185–234.

[44] Henri Marchesi, Jacques Thiriot and Lucy Vallauri, 'Marseille: le burgus oleriorum', in *Le vert et le brun*, p. 38.

However, the fashion in the western Mediterranean for green-and-brown tin-glazed ceramics was taken to a new level in Paterna ware. Unlike the Christian motifs used in ceramics made in Italy and southern France, Paterna ware used Islamic images, mixing them with Christian themes, to create a uniquely hybrid style of ceramic decoration. Figures 6 and 7 demonstrate the dual influences of Gothic style, particularly in the image of the dancing lady in figure 6, and Islamic motifs, most notably the pseudo-Arabic inscription across the centre of figure 7. The glazed green-and-brown ware of Paterna was one of the first commercial tin-glazed pottery industries in western Europe.

The documentary evidence clearly shows that it was an industry created and run by *mudéjar* potters who worked with Christian merchants to market their lively ceramics. Iconographically, the ceramics are indebted to this mix of Christian and Islamic elements. The techniques used by the potters were inherited directly from the Islamic world. Their lineage reaches back through *ta'ifa* and caliphal al-Andalus to Fatimid Egypt and ultimately ninth-century Iraq. The expansion of tin glazing in fourteenth-century Paterna was at least partly due to the new supplies of English tin brought to Valencia by Christian traders.

The mix of influences that shaped the industry in Paterna demonstrate that art, and particularly the art of decorated ceramic tableware, is rarely the product of one homogeneous culture but instead expresses elements of the cultures with which the artists have had historical, economic and cultural contact.

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[45] Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula 900–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[46] Josefa Pascual and Javier Martí, *La cerámica verde-manganeso bajomedieval valenciana* (Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 1986).

The Aesthetics of Simulation: Architectural Mimicry on Medieval Ceramic Tabourets

Margaret S. Graves

In examining a group of ceramic objects from the medieval Middle East, this study aims not only to analyse the characteristics and possible functions of these pieces, but also to open up questions about the choice of forms employed as decoration in this context. Preliminary distinctions – between the coherently mimetic and the allusive or reconfigured – that can be observed within the applied decoration on the pieces site them as an interesting exemplar of the larger phenomenon of 'architecturalising' ornament in the medieval Middle East, and ultimately engender further questions concerning ornament, taste, representational function and meaning in the material culture of the pre-modern Islamic world.[1]

The Objects

It has been noted by scholars that there has not yet been a comprehensive published study of the six-sided ceramic objects that are such a notable feature of Ayyubid-era Syrian ceramic production (figs 1–4, 9, 10, 15 and 16), and are also, though less frequently, met with amongst the ceramic products thought to originate from the late/post-Seljuq Iranian tradition (figs 5, 6 and 17).[2] This form has come to be referred to by scholars and dealers of Islamic art as a 'tabouret'.[3] Latterly these pieces have generally been understood to be low tables or stands, although the word 'tabouret' can also be used to mean a stool or low seat (its primary meaning in most French-language usage). The confusion engendered by the various meanings of the term 'tabouret', as well as the rather fluid terms for types of furniture found in the medieval sources, and the various functional interpretations possible for these six-sided objects, is summed up in Jean Soustiel's somewhat plaintive caption to a photograph of one example formerly in his collection, '*Tabouret hexagonal ou* kursi (*siege, trône, support…*)'.[4]

Certainly some earlier sources have referred to these objects as stools or seats, an idea to which this paper will return, and 'stool' also crops up on museum labels and accession records for these pieces.[5] However, imprecise though the term 'tabouret' may be, it is preferable to the repeated use of a clumsy name like 'six-sided low table', and on this point I will follow earlier writings and refer to the objects in questions as 'tabourets'.

The initial focus of this study will fall on the examples of the form that are assumed to be from Ayyubid Syria, but in the second half of the essay comparisons will be made between the use of architectural motifs within the Syrian group, and that met with on the Iranian-type tabourets. It should be noted from the outset that the division of this body of material into two geographically distinct groups – that is, 'Syrian' and 'Iranian' – is far from satisfactory, given the lack of archaeological data for most of the examples. Indeed, a tabouret in the Museum of Islamic Ceramics in Cairo (no. 256) that is unquestionably of the so-called 'Iranian' type in terms of glaze, dimensions, construction and decoration, is labelled in that museum as a product of twelfth-century Raqqa (Syria). It seems most likely that this attribution has been made simply on the basis of the object's loose formal kinship with another tabouret in the same collection which really is of the Raqqa type (no. 255; the Raqqa connection will be discussed below), although I have not been able to ascertain whether any archaeological records or dealers' notes associated with either piece may provide relevant information. In fact, the difficulties encountered in trying to separate Iranian and Syrian material of slightly later periods have been noted as an ongoing challenge for historians of ceramics,[6] and the fluid and dynamic state of visual interconnectivity east of the Mediterranean proposed by Scott Redford regarding certain cup-bearer images of the twelfth century is perhaps equally relevant for an understanding of the tabourets and

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[1] This study stems from research conducted for the second chapter of my doctoral thesis, *Worlds Writ Small: Four Studies on Miniature Architectural Forms in the Medieval Middle East* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2010).

[2] Most recently, Oliver Watson ('The Case of the Ottoman Table', *Journal of the David Collection*, 3 [2010], n. 61) has suggested that although no survey has yet been carried out, the probable total number of such medieval ceramic six-sided tables (both Syrian and Iranian types) is some dozen. To date I have located around thirty examples in total, plus a related piece in Samarqand which was kindly photographed for me by Rosalind Wade Haddon. My sincere thanks are due to Professor Watson for making the manuscript version of his article available to me, as the published version had not yet come out at the time of writing.

[3] '[T]abouret: 2.a. A low seat or stool, without back or arms, for one person: so called originally from its shape … b. *U.S.* A small table, esp. one used as a stand for house plants; a bedside table.' *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford University Press [accessed 7 August 2008], http://www.dictionary.oed.com.

[4] Jean Soustiel, *La Céramique Islamique* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1985), p. 117.

[5] For example, Ernst Kühnel, *Islamic Arts*, trans. Katherine Watson (London: Bell & Son, 1970), p. 120; the use of the word 'stool' in this instance may of course be an awkward translation rather than the author's original intention.

[6] Cristina Tonghini and Ernst J. Grube, 'Towards a History of Syrian Islamic Pottery Before 1500', *Islamic Art*, III (1988–9), p. 89.

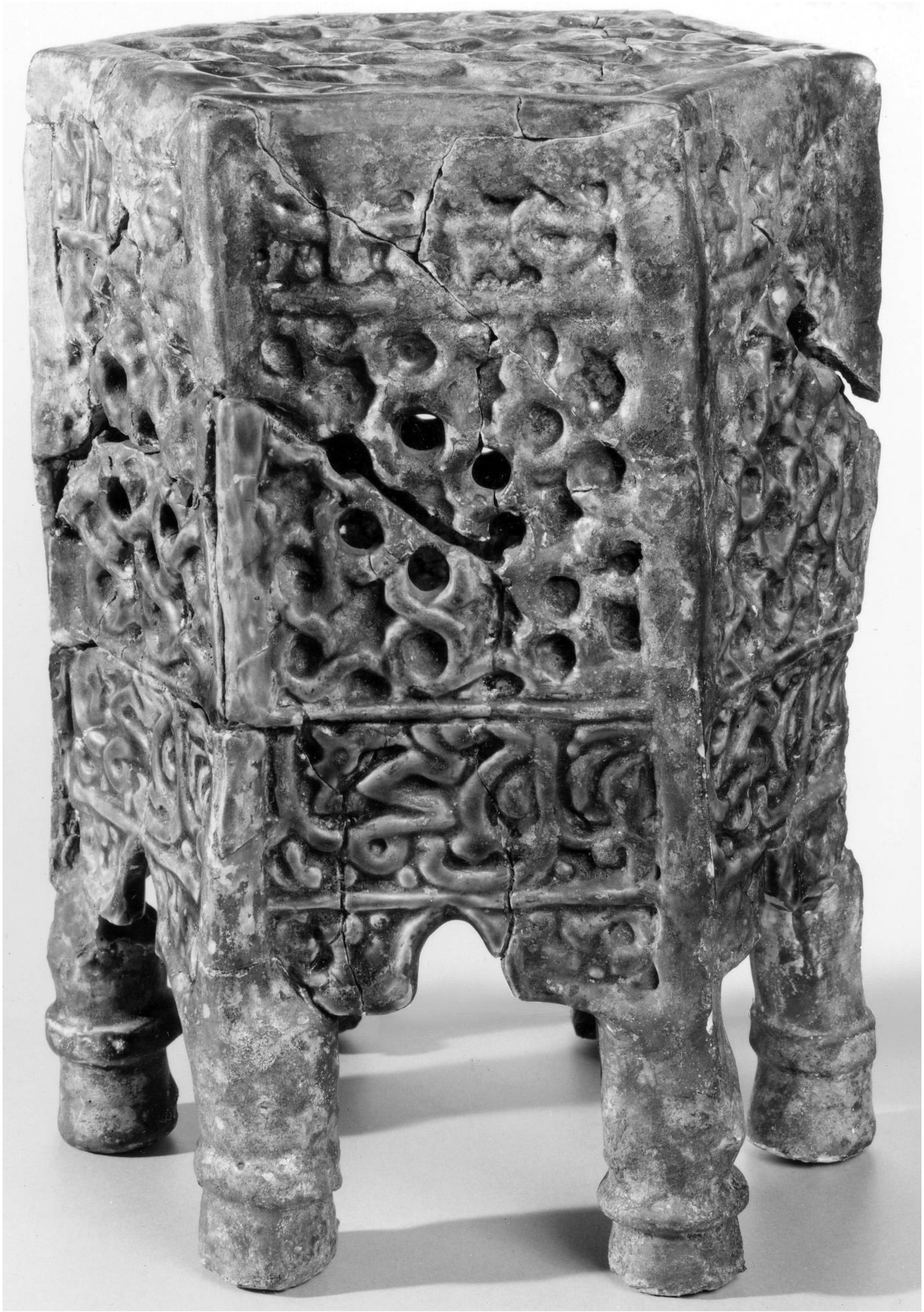

Figure 1. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period, h. 40.5 cm, d. 28.5 cm. By kind permission of the David Collection, Copenhagen, Is 207. Photo: Pernille Klemp.

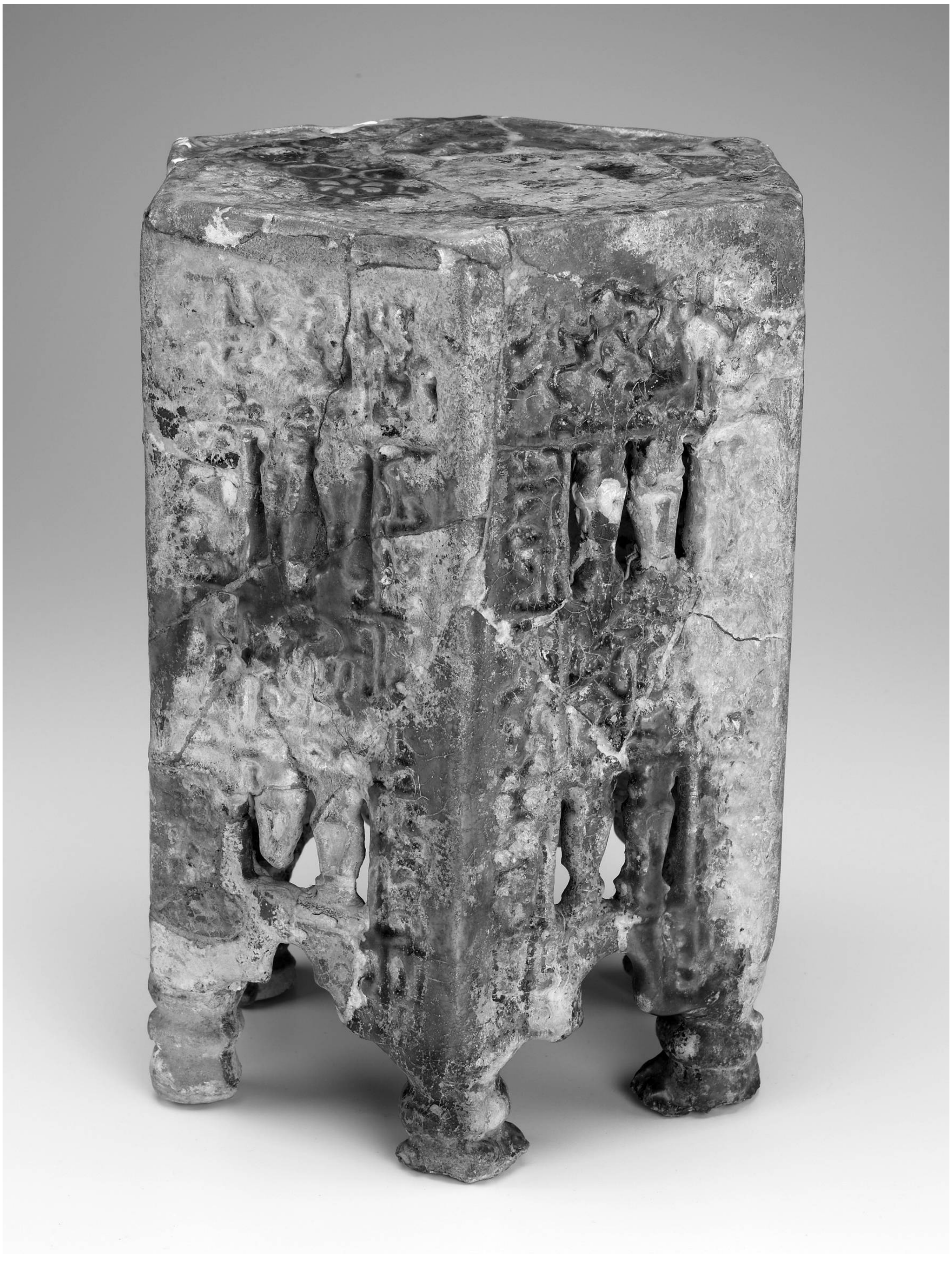

Figure 2. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, no. 1911.1. Image: Freer Gallery.

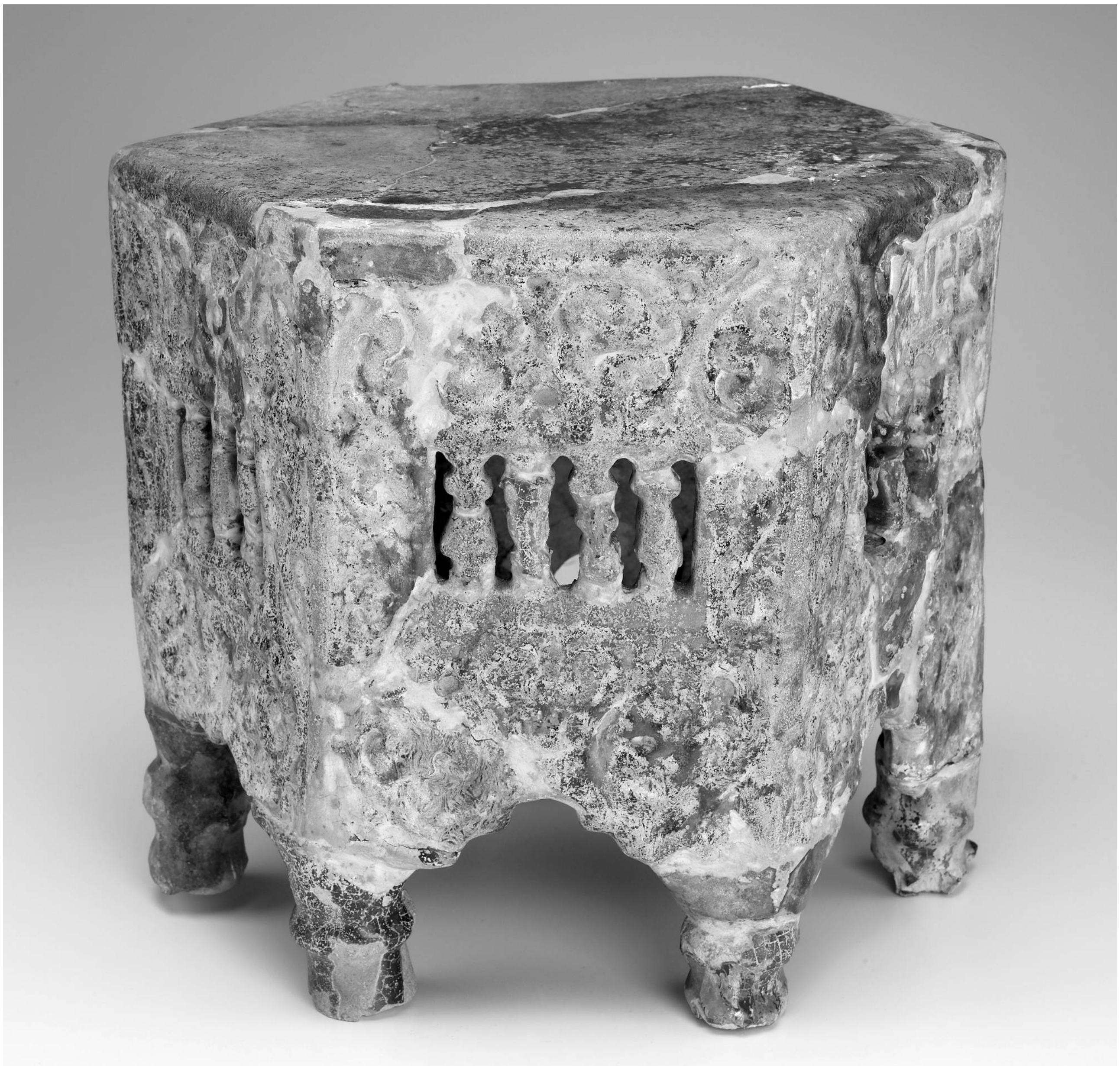

Figure 3. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, no. 1911.2.

their ornament.[7] That said, there are obvious differences between the various tabourets that allow them to be separated immediately into the two reasonably homogenous groups here referred to as 'Syrian' and 'Iranian', and for this reason the geographical labels will remain, in this study at least.

The tabourets, and related objects such as the triangular and oblong fritware[8] stands also believed to come from Ayyubid Syria (figs 7 and 8), are now scattered all over the world in various museums and private collections. Certain institutions, such as the Freer Gallery and the David Collection, have a particular concentration of these items, but there are also single examples in many other locations and doubtless more will appear in the years to come, surfacing in the art market or emerging from museum stores.

The Syrian tabourets, and the related group of oblong and triangular stands, are associated with the historic site of Raqqa in northern Syria. Although there have been lengthy art historical and archaeological debates over the attribution of certain objects to the Raqqa sites, recent scholarship seems happy to accept this type of tabouret as a product of Raqqa or the surrounding region. This association is

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[7] Scott Redford, 'On Saqis and Ceramics: Systems of Representation in the Northeast Mediterranean', in Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney (eds), France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 282.

[8] As Rosalind Wade Haddon has noted elsewhere in the present volume, the terms 'fritware' and 'stonepaste' are both somewhat misleading, but essentially these designate a fine hard body made with ground quartz and a small amount of ground frit, amongst other things.

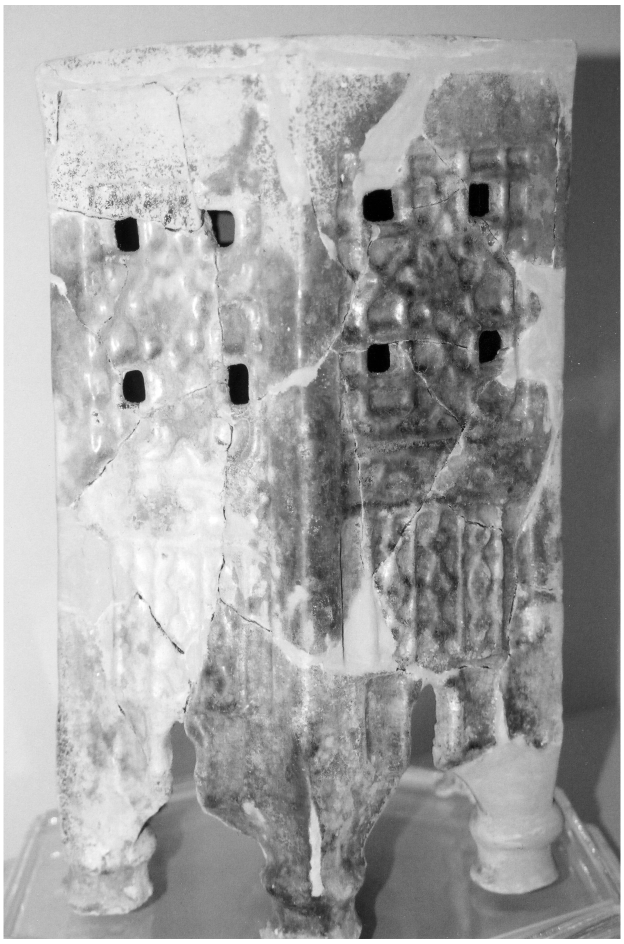

Figure 4. Ceramic tabouret, Syria (?) Ayyubid period. Çinili Köşk Museum, Istanbul. Photo: author.

based, in large part, on the discovery of a fragment of a ceramic tabouret of this type within the Great Mosque at Raqqa (restored by Nur al-Din in the twelfth century), and is solidified by the agreement of certain characteristics of the Syrian tabourets with those of other Ayyubid-era ceramic products found at Raqqa, such as the fairly thick turquoise or greenish glaze and the light, sandy fritware composition.[9] A fragment of a Raqqa-type tabouret was also found at Hama, possibly indicating that the manufacture of such objects occurred beyond Raqqa, although ceramic fragments from Iran, India and China were also discovered during the Hama excavations and the tabouret fragment may simply be another import.[10] An oblong fritware stand of a type closely related to the Syrian tabourets was excavated at Harran in southeastern Turkey, in 1951: that piece is so similar to an example in the British Museum (itself said by the dealer to be from Aleppo) that the two could have been made from the same moulds.[11] As with many early art objects, efforts to trace definitively the provenance of these pieces are often fruitless, because of the very great number of undocumented excavations in and around Raqqa that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as interest in Islamic art objects grew and the attendant art market burgeoned.[12]

Although the Syrian tabourets are not uniform in their decoration or details of form, there are consistent structural characteristics. All are six-sided, and all are constructed from moulded pieces of fritware joined together at the edges, presumably with slip, leaving the interior hollow. The fritware slabs are light in colour and strong enough to permit the use of surprisingly thin pieces for the construction of the walls and top. It is important to remember that this permitted such objects to be moved around: in spite of their heft, they are not unmanageably heavy. Most of the examples of Syrian type stand between thirty and forty centimetres tall; as such, they are a diminutive group, but taller than the examples of Iranian type, which are for the most part no more than thirty centimetres high. Although a wealth of different decorative motifs can be seen across the Syrian group, on each individual example that I have identified all six sides are identical, and presumably made from the same mould. The only exception to this is a piece in the Tareq Rajab collection in Kuwait, which appears to bear at least two different types of pierced panel, as well as at least one solid panel decorated with moulded foliate designs.[13]

All of the Syrian tabourets are mounted on turned legs, presumably made separately and then attached, and all but the aforementioned Tareq Rajab example have arched openings of some form between each pair of legs. They all have flat tops, and although some of these have large central holes in them (fig. 9), the majority do not. Those that do not have holes often bear impressed geometric decoration of a widely used 'star-and-honeycomb' type on their tops, creating a surface that is in some cases quite heavily indented or even pierced through. The presence of the large circular holes in the tops of some of the tabourets, as well as the consistent presence of such holes on the upper surfaces of the related rectangular and triangular stands, quickly prompts the question of function: what is the purpose of these objects?

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[9] Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und-Tigris-Gebiet*, vol. III (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1911), plate CXVII; Almut von Gladiss, 'Support/ petite table', in *L'Orient de Saladin: L'art des Ayyoubides* (Paris: Gallimard/ Institut du monde arabe, 2001), p. 157. A rectangular stand of related type is also recorded amongst the objects excavated from Raqqa in 1954–1955: see Direction Générale des Antiquités, *Deuxième Exposition des Découvertes Archéologiques des Années 1954–1955, Organisée par la Direction Générale des Antiquités de Syrie au Musée National de Damas* (Damascus: Direction Générale des Antiquités, 1955), p. 48.

[10] Vagn Poulsen, 'Chapitre III: Les Poteries', in Poul Jørgen Riis and Vagn Poulsen (eds), *Hama: fouilles et recherches de la Fondation Carlsberg, 1931–1938, vol. IV, 2: Les verreries et poteries médiévales* (Copenhagen: National Museum, 1957), p. 178 and fig. 579.

[11] David Storm Rice, 'Medieval Harran: Studies on its Topography and Monuments, I', *Anatolian Studies*, 2 (1952), p. 70.

[12] On the clandestine excavations that took place at Raqqa in the early twentieth century, see Gertrude Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (London: Heinemann, 1911), pp. 59–60, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Raqqa Revisited: Ceramics of Ayyubid Syria* (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 11–19.

[13] Illustrated in Géza Fehérvári, *Ceramics of the Islamic World in the Tareq Rajab Collection* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 176–177. Only three sides are visible in the illustration, but each one has a different design.

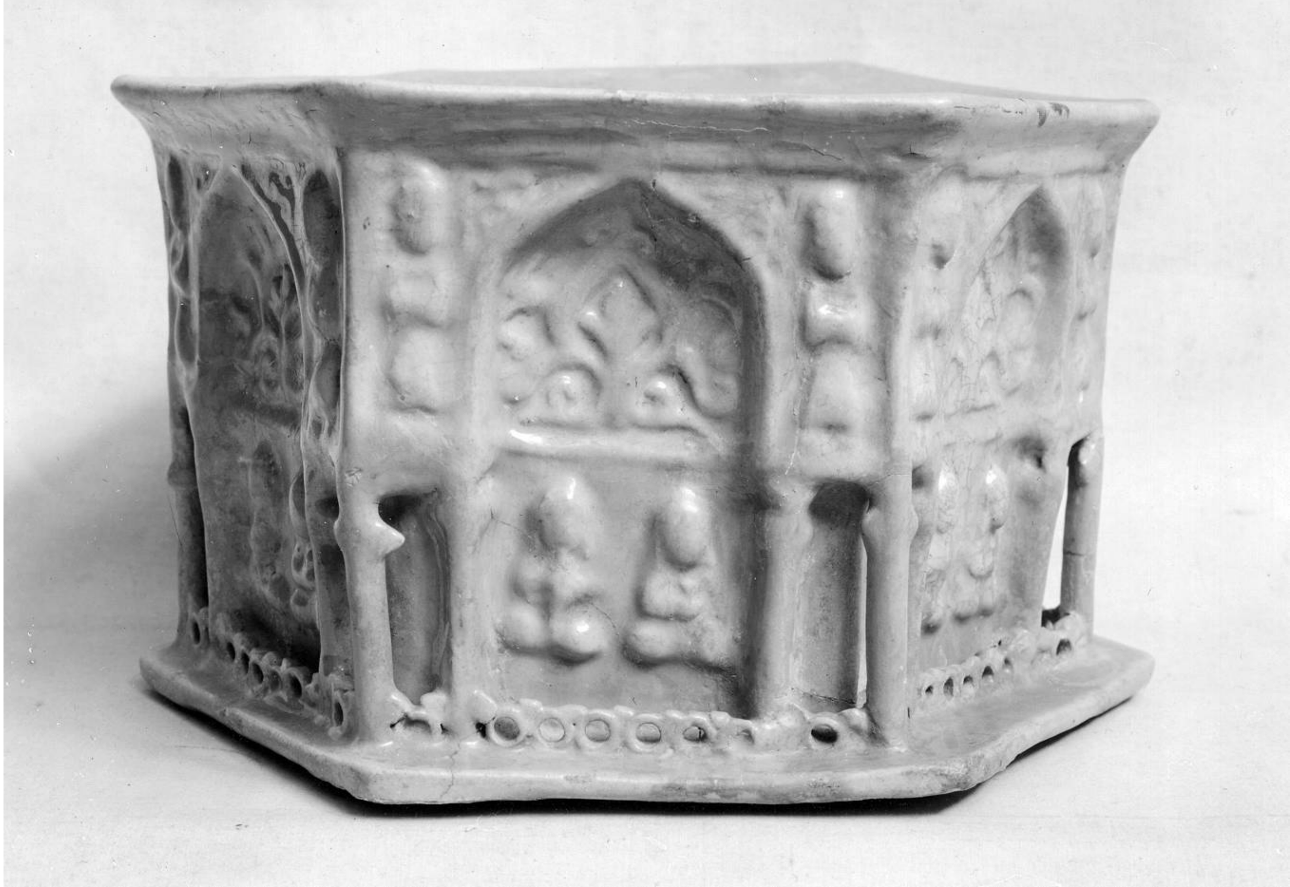

Figure 5. Ceramic tabouret, possibly Iran, late/post Seljuq period, h. 19.5 cm, d. 31.5 cm. By kind permission of the David Collection, Copenhagen, Isl 118. Photo: Pernille Klemp

Possible Functions

Any attempt to fix the precise meaning of medieval Arabic and Persian names for items of furniture risks burying the reader in a lexicographical landslide, and not necessarily providing much illumination in the process. Terms such as *khiwan*, *ma'ida*, *siniyya*, *qa'ida* and *kursi* are not used entirely consistently in the medieval texts, and there appears to be some degree of slippage between meanings which centre around the idea of elevated tables and trays placed on stands.[14] Intriguingly, Goitein has also recorded the use of a further term *khunja* (Persian, 'little table') in the thirteenth-century Geniza documents.[15] Although, contrary to the assertions of certain nineteenth-century European authors, it is evident that there was a considerable medieval Islamic tradition of furniture-making, Sadan and others have demonstrated that a clear distinction cannot really be drawn between tray supports, tables and stools in this historical

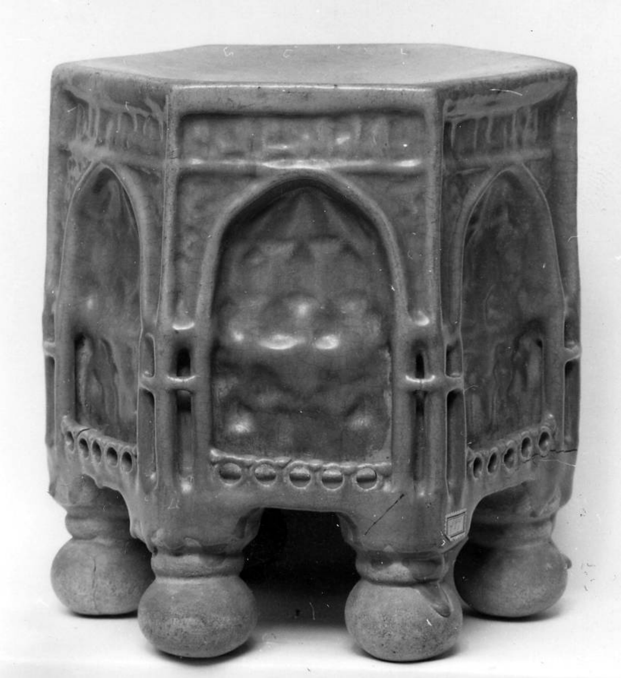

Figure 6. Ceramic tabouret, possibly Iran, late/post Seljuq period, h. 26 cm, d. 24.5 cm. By kind permission of the David Collection, Copenhagen, Isl 108. Photo: Pernille Klemp.

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[14] Joseph Sadan, 'Athath', Encyclopaedia of Islam (2nd ed.), Supp. Fasc. 1–2 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), pp. 99–100; Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, vol. IV: Daily Life* (Berkeley/L.A./London: University of California Press, 1983), p. 144; Ghada Hijjawi al-Qaddumi (trans. and ed.), *Book of Gifts and Rarities: Kitab al-Haddaya wa al-Tuhaf* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1996), pp. 72, 77, 90, 114, 176, 178, 188, 235.

[15] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, vol. IV*, p. 145.

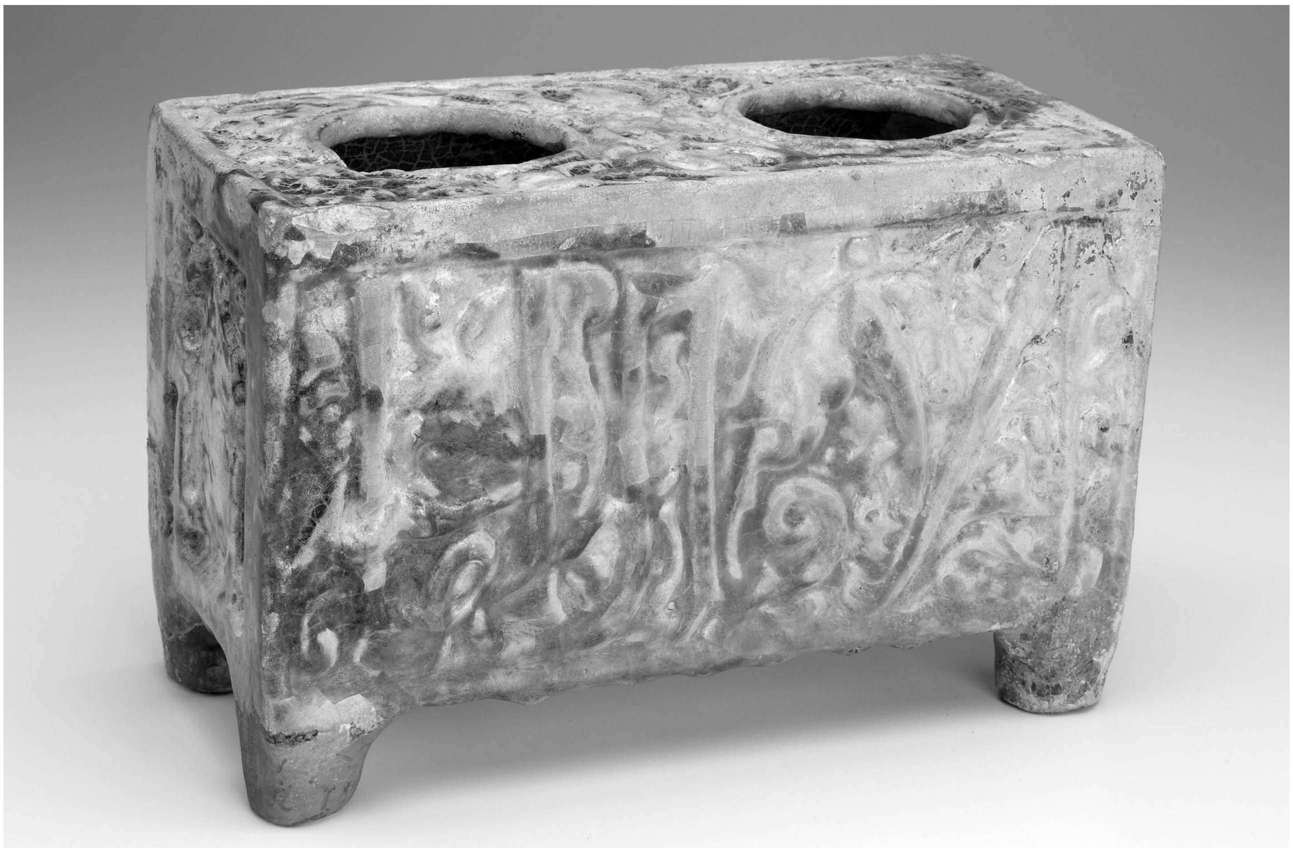

Figure 7. Ceramic stand, Syria, Ayyubid period. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, no. 09.42.

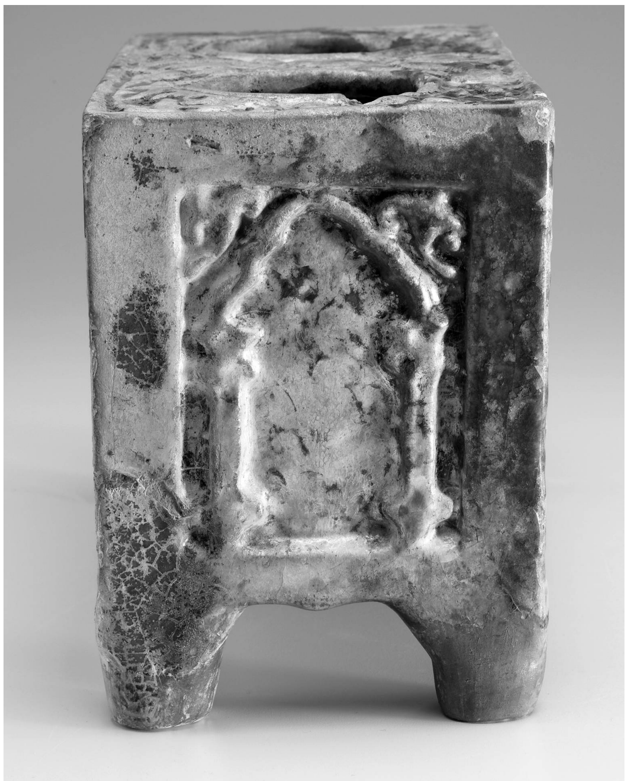

Figure 8. End view of ceramic stand, Syria, Ayyubid period. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, no.09.42.

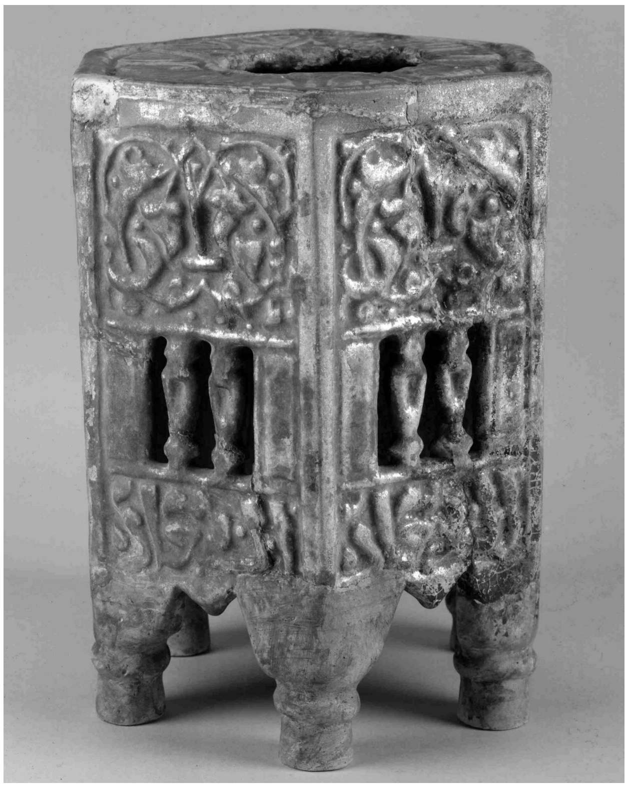

Figure 9. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period, h. 26 cm, d. 21 cm. By kind permission of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, no. I. 537. Photo: I. Geske.

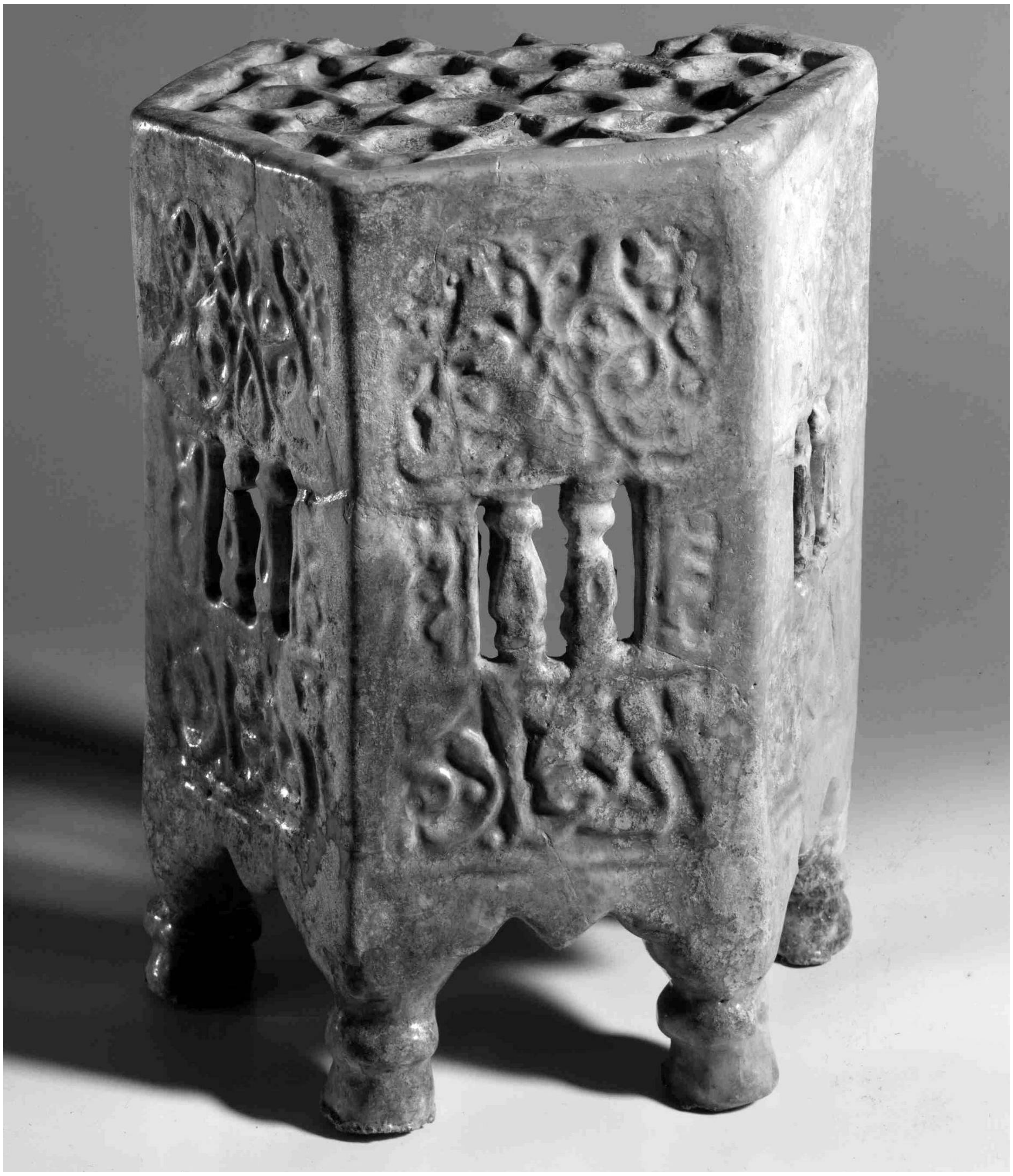

Figure 10. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period, h. 32 cm, d. 26.5 cm. By kind permission of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, no. I. 4113. Photo: G. Niedermeiser.

context.[16] However, looking to the tabourets themselves, one can tell from the exposed sides of a partially damaged example in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin (fig. 10) that the fritware body is very thin in some places. When this thin, fragile body is viewed in conjunction with the elevation on six fairly spindly legs, the generally narrow vertical silhouette and small upper surface of tabourets from the Syrian group (diameters are generally between twenty and thirty-five centimetres), it becomes impossible to accept such objects as seats. Furthermore, if these objects were intended for use as stools, what meaning could possibly be ascribed to the large circular holes found in the tops of certain examples?

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[16] Joseph Sadan, *Le mobilier au Proche-Orient médiéval* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 59–94; James Michael Rogers, 'Furniture in Islam', in Georgina Herrmann (ed.), *The Furniture of Western Asia: Ancient and Traditional* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), p. 245; Watson, 'Case of the Ottoman Table', ms. pp. 20–21.

Miniature paintings from the thirteenth century onwards attest to the widespread practice of supporting dishes and vessels on low tables. Low oblong stands with turned feet appear as supports for vessels in a mid-to-late thirteenth-century illustrated manuscript of the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri (British Library Or.1200, fol. 20v; fig. 11). There are some painted images suggestive of a role for the tabourets and stands with large central holes: as stands in which to rest vessels. A larger, taller stand for a water jar, with an arched opening between the two visible legs, is depicted in a painting from the Oxford *Maqamat* manuscript (*Marsh* 458, fol. 131; fig. 12), dated to 1337 and probably painted in Cairo. An undated and unglazed ceramic stand bearing a remarkable similarity to the stand seen in this illustration, even down to a barbotine decoration of flowers, is currently on display in the National Museum in Aleppo where it successfully supports a large unglazed jar, albeit an empty one.[17] Frontal depictions of large, point-ended jars resting within stands which must be composed of a flat top with a central hole, mounted on legs, are visible in two miniatures from the St Petersburg *Maqamat* (S.23, pp. 30 and 90).[18] A more elaborate representation of what appears to be a large glazed jar resting in a square stand on legs, which is in turn set in a niche, is visible in a *Shahnama* illustration from Topkapi album H.2153, thought to date from the fourteenth century.[19]

Looking at later periods, various miniature paintings from the Timurid period show six-sided tables, some of which are even turquoise in colour like the ceramic tabourets. However, in form the depicted Timurid tables tend to be far larger and broader than the Syrian ceramic tabourets (fig. 13), and sometimes have elaborate legs of Far Eastern appearance that curve outwards from the table body and as such bear little relation to the ceramic tabourets.

In spite of the apparent lack of precisely corresponding depictions from miniature painting, it seems reasonable to presume that the ceramic tabourets were originally intended as low stands for food and drink, and possibly for the display of fine vessels. The indented upper surfaces of those tabourets without holes in their tops are not so irregular that a flat-bottomed dish or tray would have trouble resting on them, and it seems reasonable to conclude that those examples that do have holes in the top must have been designed to have a dish, vessel or vase set securely into them. The moulded designs found around the central hole

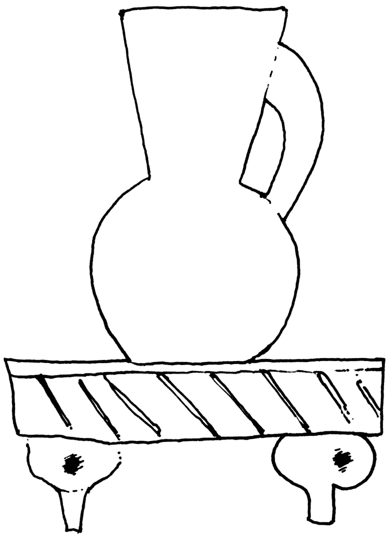

Figure 11. After an illustration from a manuscript of the Maqamat*, British Library 1200, fol. 20v. Drawing by the author.*

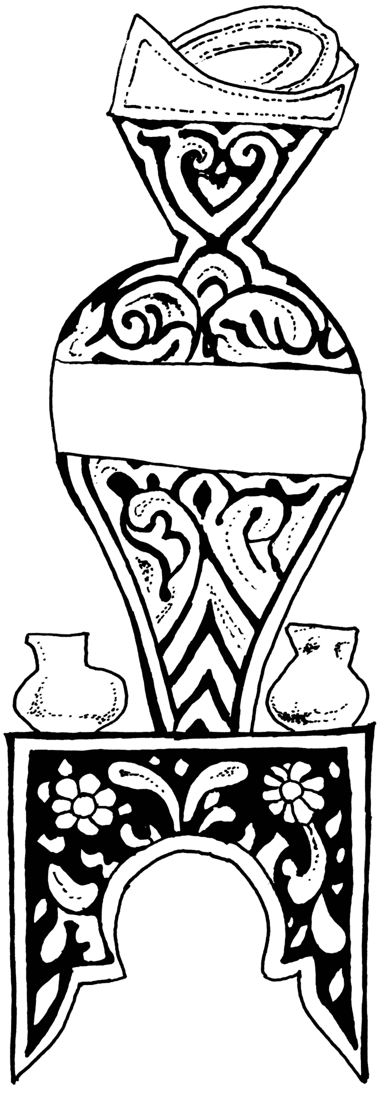

Figure 12. After an illustration from a manuscript of the Maqamat*, Oxford, Marsh 458, fol. 131. Drawing by the author.*

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[17] Mr. Assad Yusuf informed me when I visited the museum that the date of this Syrian object is unknown. A comparable form of stand, with four stocky legs separated by arched openings, can be seen amongst the Islamic earthenware finds from Susa now held in the Musée du Louvre: see Guillermina Joel *et al.*, *Suse: terres cuites islamiques* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2005), p. 154.

[18] I would like to thank Dr Shirley Guthrie for her generous and enthusiastic help with my attempts to locate comparable objects in the *Maqamat* illustrations.

[19] Adel T. Adamova, *Medieval Persian Painting: The Evolution of an Artistic Vision* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2008), p. 36.

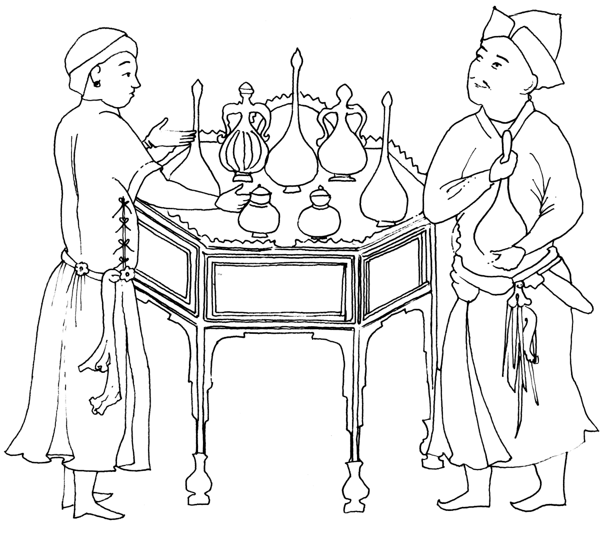

Figure 13. After a manuscript illustration of a royal banquet in a garden, ascribed to Bihzad; Herat, late fifteenth century, now in Museum of Fine Arts Boston (acc. no. 14.569). Drawing by the author.

of an object like figure 9 would look attractive radiating out from the bottom of a vase or bottle.

It should be briefly considered that these ceramic tabourets may have served as a type of hot plate or chafing dish. It would be possible, with a small brazier of the right dimensions, to place one of the tabourets directly over a brazier that would heat the underside of the top surface, and the underside of anything placed in the central hole, thus keeping it warm. If this was the case, the perforated sides seen on many of the Syrian tabourets would both allow the circulation of air, bringing oxygen to the burning coals, and would shine out with the glow coming from within. Travellers in early twentieth-century Persia describe the use of a low table referred to as a *kursi*,[20] which was placed over a brazier of hot charcoal and covered with a padded quilt, around which the inhabitants of a house would sit in winter.[21] However, if this were also how the medieval tabourets were used, one would expect to see evidence of this in extensive traces of soot and scorching on the insides, which to the best of my knowledge has not been reported by archaeologists or curators.

Materials and Mimicry

More pertinently, it has been suggested that the ceramic tabourets were probably relatively rare in their period and were made in imitation of more commonly used wooden tables, which have since perished or been recycled in some way.[22] Secular wooden furniture from this period, because of its perishable nature, is notoriously rare; thus through an accident of survival we have what is almost certainly a misleading preponderance of ceramic examples of this type. A rare wooden table thought to originate from eleventh- or twelfth-century Afghanistan and now in the David Collection (fig. 14) holds some clues as to the appearance of the now-lost wooden cousins of the ceramic group, as do some elements of the ceramic tabourets themselves.[23] The thick turned legs of the wooden table correspond to an extent, allowing for the characteristics of different media, to those of the ceramic tabourets, and the incorporation of modelled wooden components to form a miniature section of *mashrabiyya* screen on each side of the Afghan table is a none-too-distant echo of the pierced side panels of some of the Syrian ceramic examples, which can also be related to architectural screens.

Also closely related to the ceramic tabourets in terms of decorative schema is an ivory table from Mamluk Syria or Egypt, now in the al-Sabah collection, Kuwait (no. LNS 41).[24] Although of square rather than polygonal plan, and (with each side measuring forty-three centimetres) considerably larger than the ceramic tabourets, this piece incorporates a series of tiny collared balusters of turned ivory along each side of the stand, segmenting the void between the tabletop and the lower crossbeam. A further piece of furniture from Mamluk Egypt, a six-sided inlaid wooden Qur'an stand on legs, carries a similar band of tiny collared balusters in ivory and dark wood.[25] These are mounted around all six sides of the stand, low on the body, beneath a band of inlaid decoration that presents the image of a continuous arcade of black-and-white arches sprung from thick decorative columns all the way around the object. The architectural aspects of that Mamluk piece are unmistakable: in addition to the tiny balustrade and arcade, the door that permits access to the inside of the 'cupboard' section in the body of the stand is decorated with a further, larger arch complete with joggled voussoirs in black and white, clearly and intentionally imitative of *ablaq* masonry.[26] Although well over a metre tall and far larger than the ceramic tabourets, the Mamluk wooden stand provides important evidence of a consciously

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[20] The name *kursi* is sometimes also applied to the ceramic tabourets (see Soustiel's caption, cited above) and, adding yet another furniture type into the *mêlée*, to the six-sided wooden Qur'an chests or stands of Ottoman Turkey. See Margaret S. Graves, 'Treasuries, Tombs and Reliquaries: A Group of Ottoman Qur'an Boxes of Architectural Form', in Amanda Phillips and Refqa Abu-Remaileh (eds), *The Meeting Place of British Middle Eastern Studies* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 78–98.

[21] Clara Colliver Rice, *Persian Women and Their Ways* (London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1923), pp. 172–173; Bess Allen Donaldson, *The Wild Rue: A Study of Muhammadan Magic and Folklore in Iran* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), p. 100.

[22] Watson, 'Case of the Ottoman Table', ms. p. 22; Rogers, 'Furniture in Islam', p. 245.

[23] Kjeld von Folsach, 'A Number of Pigmented Wooden Objects from the Eastern Islamic World', *Journal of the David Collection*, 1 (2003), pp. 73, 91.

[24] Marilyn Jenkins (ed.), *Islamic Art in the Kuwait National Museum: The al-Sabah Collection* (London: Sotheby, 1983), p. 89.

[25] Illustrated in Bernard O'Kane, *The Treasures of Islamic Art in the Museums of Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), p. 13.

[26] A further wooden stand of similar appearance, also thought to come from Mamluk or early Ottoman Egypt, is now held in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul. That piece does not incorporate a section of balustrade, but bears an even more overtly architectural door, also complete with joggled *ablaq* voussoirs. See Ernst Kühnel, *Die Sammlung Türkischer und Islamischer Kunst im Tschinili Köschk* (Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1938), plate 20.

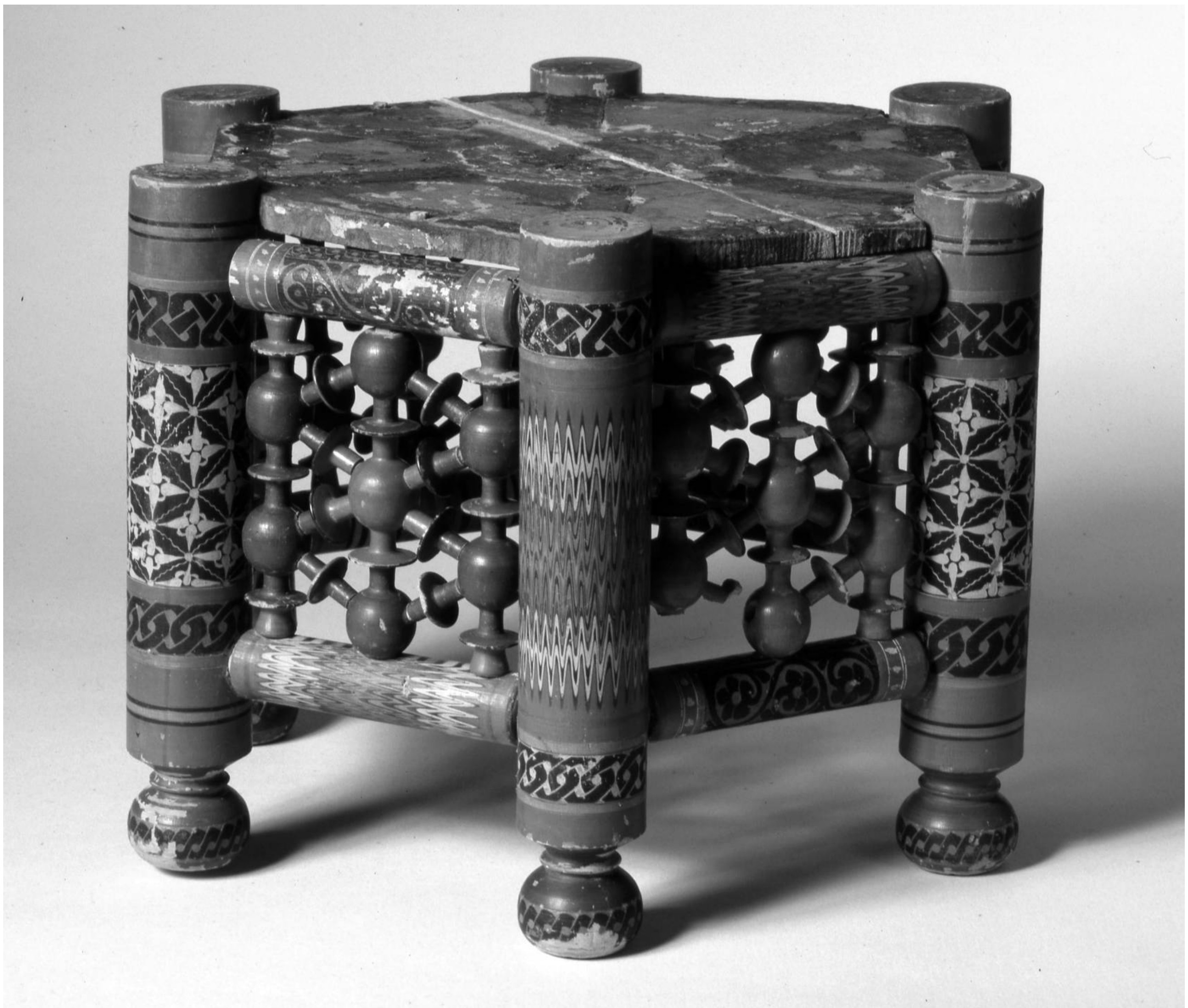

Figure 14. Wooden table, Afghanistan, eleventh or twelfth century, h. 26 cm, d. 38 cm. By kind permisson of the David Collection, Copenhagen, 33/1997. Photo: Pernille Klemp.

architectural strain at work in the decoration of a six-sided stand from the late medieval Middle East, and, although precise connections cannot be drawn, there would appear to be some decorative continuity between this wooden object and the earlier ceramic pieces, suggesting the existence a now-lost group of wooden tables and stands of more modest dimensions but also incorporating six-sided forms and pierced balustrades. The teardrop outline of the collared ivory balusters on the Mamluk pieces is matched, albeit in a flattened, almost two-dimensional form, in the panels of pierced balustrades that decorate several of the ceramic tabourets. In certain examples (figs 9 and 15) the balusters appear to have been inverted for no apparent reason: perhaps they were moulded separately and applied afterwards, by someone unfamiliar with the original form that was being aped.

The pierced panels with teardrop-shaped balusters, such a frequent feature of the Syrian tabourets, also appear regularly on the related corpus of smaller triangular and rectangular ceramic stands thought to originate from Raqqa. On one rectangular Raqqa stand in the Syrian National Museum in Damascus, the feature described in the museum catalogue as an image of ‘burning lamps’ on the long sides of the piece appears to be a relief-moulded version of the teardrop balustrade, without any of the characteristic perforation.[27] It seems most likely that these sections of balustrade mimic components from furniture like the aforementioned Mamluk survivals that are partially imitative of architectural forms, or possibly sections of wooden screens. One of the finest examples of medieval Islamic woodcarving, a wooden screen thought to have been made for the Damascus mausoleum of the Seljuq *amir* Duqaq (r. 1095–1104), reworked and moved to the Musalla al-‘Idain Mosque in the late twelfth century, and now in the National Museum in Damascus, contains two rows of

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[27] Mona Al-Moadin *et al.*, *Highlights of the National Museum of Damascus* (Madrid: Media Minds, 2006), p. 167. A non-perforated single baluster also appears on both end panels of a rectangular Raqqa-type stand in the Khalili Collection (POT 329); in this case the baluster is also inverted, like those of the pierced balustrades of figures 9 and 16.

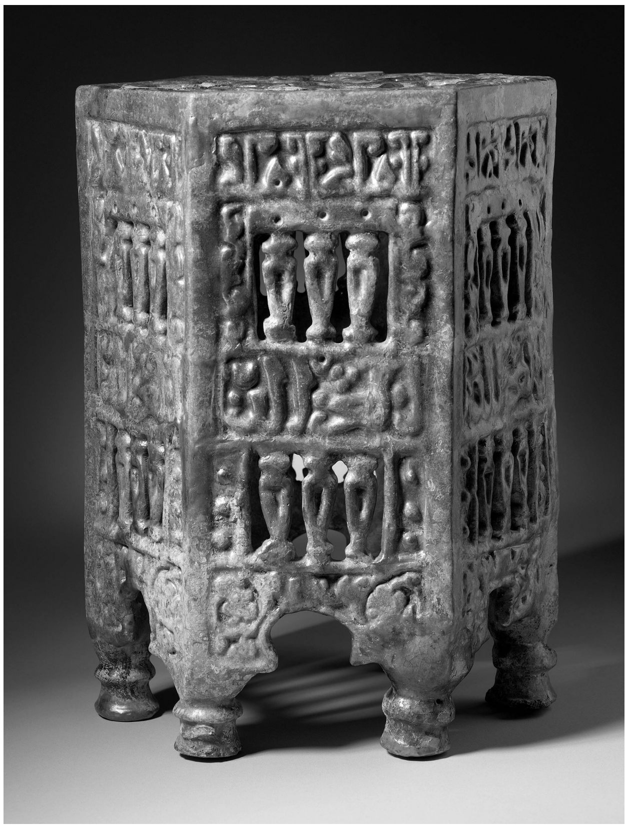

Figure 15. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period, h. 35.5 cm, d. 26.6 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Madina Collection of Islamic Art, gift of Camilla Chandler Frost, no. M.2002.1.18. Photo ©2009 Museum Associates/ LACMA.

turned, collared wooden balusters.[28] Such screens, which once must have been widely used in a range of architectural settings, can be considered either as furniture or as more permanent architectural features, depending on context,[29] and the appearance of the pierced ceramic balustrades of the tabourets and stands suggests that this point of intersection between furniture and architecture has been exploited by the creators of the tabourets.

From the *Maqamat* miniatures it can also be seen that diminutive wooden balusters appeared in several contexts in the medieval Arab lands: on furniture, within semi-architectural structures such as minbars, and in truly architectural contexts such as roof edges and the base of minarets.[30] As a group, the Syrian tabourets and stands make considerable use of pierced designs, not only imitating rows of turned balustrades but also incorporating partially pierced star-and-honeycomb designs that are strongly reminiscent both of the designs of architectural strapwork panels, and of window grilles.[31] The use of such motifs suggests a close relationship or even a direct reference to certain architectural surfaces, but the Syrian tabourets are not mimetic objects: the relationship with architectural surfaces and structures seen across this group is allusive rather than descriptive.

Alongside the allusive use of architectural motifs and surfaces, one can also see some more directly mimetic miniaturised architectural elements on the Syrian tabourets. The perforations that mimic arched windows supported on columns on two of the Syrian tabourets (fig. 16 and the very similar piece in the Khalili Collection, POT 1700)[32] are one example of this: here, the pointed window niches that appear on each side mark out a nascent architectural conception of the object as a whole, creating the beginnings of a miniaturised architectural schema. A further instance of the architecturally mimetic strain of decoration is the applied arch seen on the end panels of figure 8. This motif is seen on certain other rectangular and triangular stands of the Syrian group, for example a triangular piece in the Ashmolean Museum (no. 1956.1), and a rectangular stand in the Museum of Islamic Ceramics in Cairo (no. 257) which is very similar to the Freer piece illustrated in figures 7 and 8, but to the best of my knowledge applied arches of this type are not found on any of the six-sided tabourets. There is an echo, in these empty-niched applied arches, of some of the simpler glazed ceramic ‘mihrab’ tiles of the medieval period. This may be an important warning against regarding every image of an arch seen on a Middle-Eastern object as a reference to the mihrab, for there is, for the most part, nothing to suggest that the arch found on the end of a stand has any religious significance.[33]

However, while one should always be wary of over-interpreting commonplace forms, it is well to remember that certain visual units can gain a wide circulation in surprising contexts. The end panels of an oblong Syrian ceramic stand in the National Museum in Damascus are decorated with applied arches, like those of figure 8, but unlike other examples of the arch seen on Syrian stands, they have been further elaborated with the painted image of a vase-shaped lamp hanging on a chain from the apex of the arch.[34] The addition of this secondary painted decoration changes the arch – a common decorative motif

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[28] Mona Al-Moadin, ‘Wooden screen in two parts’, Museum with no Frontiers [accessed 25 August 2011], http://www.museumwnf.org.

[29] See Michael Roaf, ‘Furniture and Architecture’, in Georgina Herrmann (ed.), *The Furniture of Western Asia: Ancient and Traditional* (Mainz: Zabern, 1996), pp. 21–28.

[30] See the St Petersburg *Maqamat* manuscript, pp. 82, 275, and the al-Wasiti *Maqamat* (Bibliothèque nationale de France ms. Arabe 5847), fol. 164v, illustrated in the microfiches that accompany Oleg Grabar’s *The Illustrations of the Maqamat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[31] See Finbarr B. Flood, *Palaces of Crystal, Sanctuaries of Light: Windows, Jewels and Glass in Medieval Islamic Architecture* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1993), figs. 32 and 42; Robert W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the al-Aqsa Mosque: A Record of Archaeological Gleanings from the Repairs of 1938–42* (Jerusalem: Oxford University Press, 1949), pl. xxi.

[32] Illustrated in Ernst Grube, *Cobalt and Lustre: The First Centuries of Islamic Pottery: The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. 9* (London: Nour Foundation/ Azimuth/ Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 284–285.

[33] See Terry Allen, ‘Imagining Paradise in Islamic Art’, online article at *Palm Tree Books*, Solipsist Press [accessed 26 May 2009], http://sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/ip.html.

[34] See Abu-l-Faradj Al-‘Ush, ‘Les bois de l’ancien mausolée de Khalid ibn al-Walid a Hims’, *Ars Orientalis*, 5 (1963), pp. 111–139, plate 7 fig. 19.

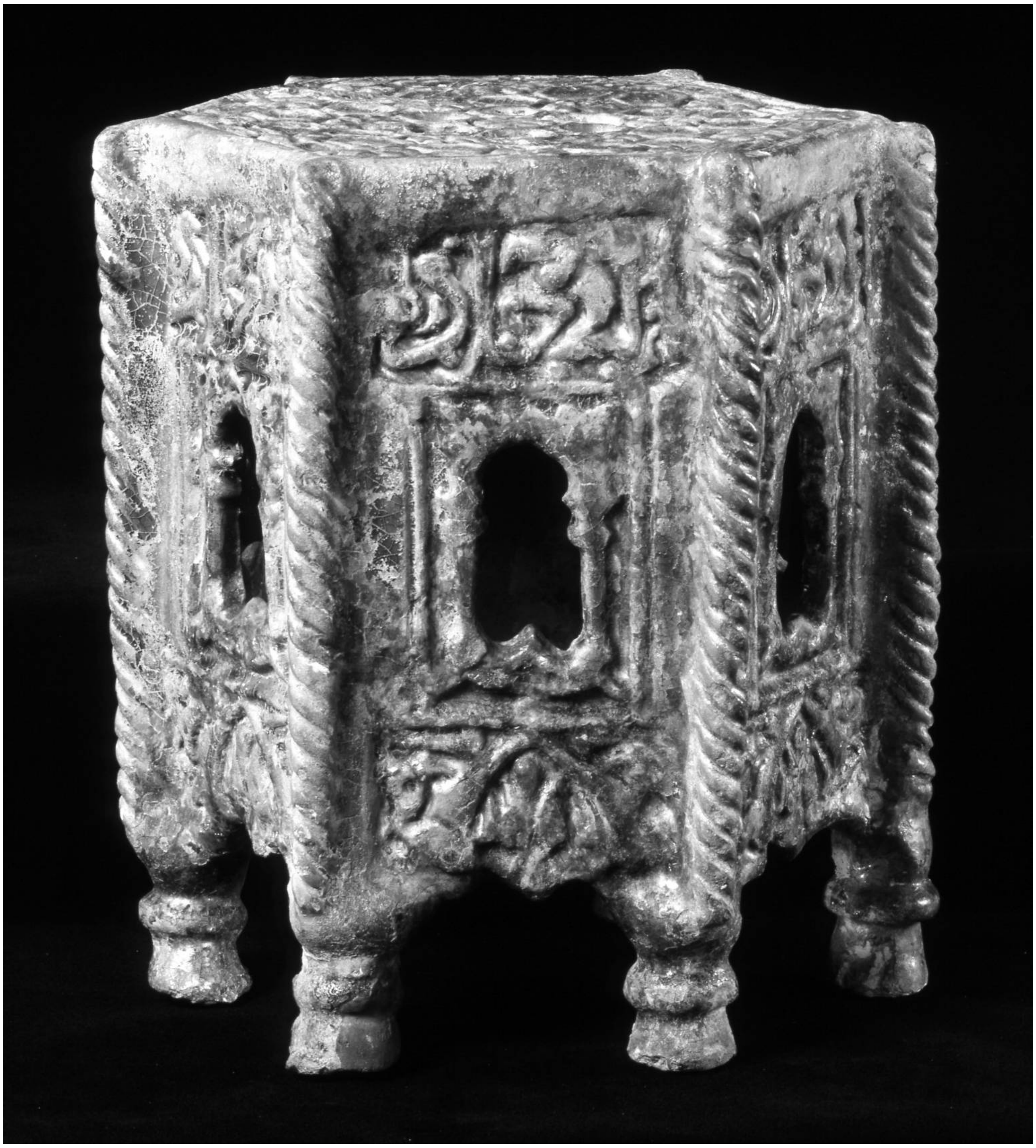

Figure 16. Ceramic tabouret, Syria, Ayyubid period, h. 32 cm, d. 29.5 cm. By kind permission of the David Collection, Copenhagen, 21/1982. Photo: Pernille Klemp.

that has multiple and often rather prosaic applications in the division and organisation of decorative space[35] – from an essentially non-representational form of decoration into a recognisable 'image': that of the lamp hung in a niche, an apparently inexhaustible symbol of the sacred made manifest in architectural, pictorial and literary forms in the Islamic world, beginning with the famous 'Light Verse' of the Qur'an (24:35) and continuing through mihrab imagery, prayer rugs and other materials to the present day.[36] Is the addition of the painted lamp to the applied arch on the end of a ceramic stand an indication of religious intentions for the object? Most likely it is not. While the image of the hanging lamp undoubtedly carries powerful spiritual resonances in some contexts, it is perhaps more plausible in the case of a mass-produced ceramic stand that the application of that same motif represents a purely visual response mechanism generated by the image of an applied arch.

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[35] Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 166–172.

[36] The most frequently cited medieval literary source is al-Ghazali's *Mishkat al-Anwar* (English trans. by W.H. Temple Gairdner, Lahore, 1924, pp. 104–158). On the material remains, see Nuha N. N. Khoury, 'The Mihrab Image: Commemorative Themes in medieval Islamic Architecture', *Muqarnas*, 9 (1992), pp. 11–28; and on prayer rugs Richard Ettinghausen, 'The Early History, Use and Iconography of the Prayer Rug', in Richard Ettinghausen *et al.* (eds), *Prayer Rugs* (Washington, D.C.: Textile Museum, 1974), pp. 10–25; James Dickie, 'The Iconography of the Prayer Rug', *Oriental Art*, 18 (1972), pp. 41–49.

The Architectural Miniature

There exists, as was mentioned earlier in this paper, a further group of so-called tabourets, less numerous and less uniform than the examples believed to come from Syria. This second group is thought to come from twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iran, and is mostly made up of monochrome-glazed turquoise examples. Additionally, there is an extraordinary lustre-decorated ceramic tabouret in the Philadelphia Museum of Art which combines a low, flat-topped and six-sided form with a wealth of skilfully executed lustre decoration, including figural, animal, vegetal, geometric and epigraphic motifs.[37] A second fragmentary lustre-painted tabouret, decorated with images of what appear to be mounted riders and seated musicians, is in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.[38] Although it is the turquoise-glazed Iranian pieces that present the most direct parallel with the Syrian tabourets, these lustre-painted examples are also important signifiers of the architectural sensibility that runs through the decoration of the group as a whole.

Richard Ettinghausen has confidently asserted that the Iranian tabourets are miniature replicas of garden architecture.[39] While sharing a six-sided and flat-topped form with the Syrian examples, with moulded and modelled decoration, the Iranian tabourets (figures 5, 6 and 17) are fashioned along more unequivocally mimetic architectural lines. The Iranian group incorporates complex architectural details such as *muqarnas* niches, pierced screens, columns, balustrades and steps – even a second storey in some cases – all carefully miniaturised. While the appearance of some of these pieces might suggest considerable later restoration, others, including the lustre-painted examples, are less troubling. Taken as a group, there can be no doubt that these Iranian examples are to be read as miniature buildings, and – given the trouble that has been taken by the craftsmen – we can assume that these were regarded as elegant or desirable building types. In comparison, the Syrian tabourets remain stands or tables in the first instance, however much they may make much decorative use of the architectural elements and surfaces of balustrade, window, screen, and arch. It is only perhaps on the two Syrian tabourets that are decorated with one pierced arched window on each panel (figure 16 and its Khalili Collection counterpart) that we begin to see the suggestion of a miniaturised architectural structure, rather than a reconfigured composition of architectural elements.

Ettinghausen's suggestion that the Iranian tabourets represent types of garden architecture seems plausible. The lack of surviving structures of this type from the medieval period can be easily explained by the relative ephemerality of garden pavilions, at their most basic a platform with a canopy borne on wooden supports.[40] There are surviving Seljuq textual references to 'fixed and movable pavilions' (*koshkha-ye revan u sakin*) that tantalise but fail to give any real idea of shape or structure.[41] From the fourteenth century onwards we have the evidence of miniature paintings to give some idea of what Middle Eastern garden architecture might have looked like, and there are many later illustrations of polygonal kiosks of one or two storeys that are comparable with the Iranian tabouret group.[42] Travellers' reports of the garden kiosks of Timur also give some idea of the heights of grandeur that these pleasure structures could reach.[43]

Interestingly, the roofs of the polygonal pavilions depicted in Timurid and Safavid miniature paintings are very often flat and populated, with a miniature six-sided ventilation structure topped with a pointed canopy raised on six poles appearing on very many of these flat-roofed examples.[44] I do not, on this point, agree with Ettinghausen's suggestion that the architectural forms imitated by the tabourets would have had a domed or conical roof, which has been dispensed with on the tabourets to allow them to function as tables.[45] Dominic Brookshaw has noted that many literary sources refer to a *majlis* taking place on the roof

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[37] See Felice Fischer, *Philadelphia Museum of Art: Handbook of the Collections* (Philadelphia: Museum of Art, 1995), p. 64; Oliver Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, London, 1985, pp. 106–107.

[38] L.T. Giuzal'ian, 'Tri iranskikh srednevekovykh glinyanykh stolika', in *Issledovaniya po istorii kul'tury naradov Vostoka: Sbornik v chest' Akademika I.A. Orbeli* (Moscow/ Leningrad: n.p., 1960), pp. 313–319; see also the colour illustration in Adèl Adamova, *et al.*, *Persia, Thirty Centuries of Art and Culture* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2007), pp. 51, 102.

[39] Richard Ettinghausen, 'Introduction', in Elizabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen (eds), *The Islamic Garden, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture IV* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976), p. 9.

[40] For example, see the structure depicted in the miniature painting 'Zal and Rudaba Celebrate their Wedding at Night in the Summerhouse', from a manuscript of the *Shahnama*, Herat or Isfahan, 1602, now in the Khalili Collection, London, and illustrated in Eleanor Sims, Boris Marshak and Ernst Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and its Sources* (New Haven/ London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 244.

[41] Scott Redford, *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia: Seljuk Gardens and Pavilions of Alanya, Turkey* (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2000), p. 30.

[42] For example, the structure depicted on the left hand panel of the famous Timurid double-page frontispiece, 'A Convivial Gathering at the Court of Sultan-Husayn Bayqara in Herat', from an illustrated *Bustan* of Sa'adi dated 1488, executed in Herat for Sultan Husayn and now in the National Library in Cairo (Adab Farsi 908, fols 1v–2r). Illustrated in Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles: LACMA, 1989), pp. 260–261.

[43] See Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 174–175. O'Kane has argued that the twelve-sided *Namakdan* in Afghanistan should be regarded as a structure of the Timurid period rather than the Safavid, which would make it the closest parallel for the polygonal structures represented by the tabourets, although a Timurid dating would still place it considerably later than anything the tabourets were referencing. See Bernard O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture in Khurasan* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1987), pp. 299–300.

[44] These structures also represent a means of letting light in: see O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture*, pp. 12–13.

[45] Ettinghausen, 'Introduction', p. 9.

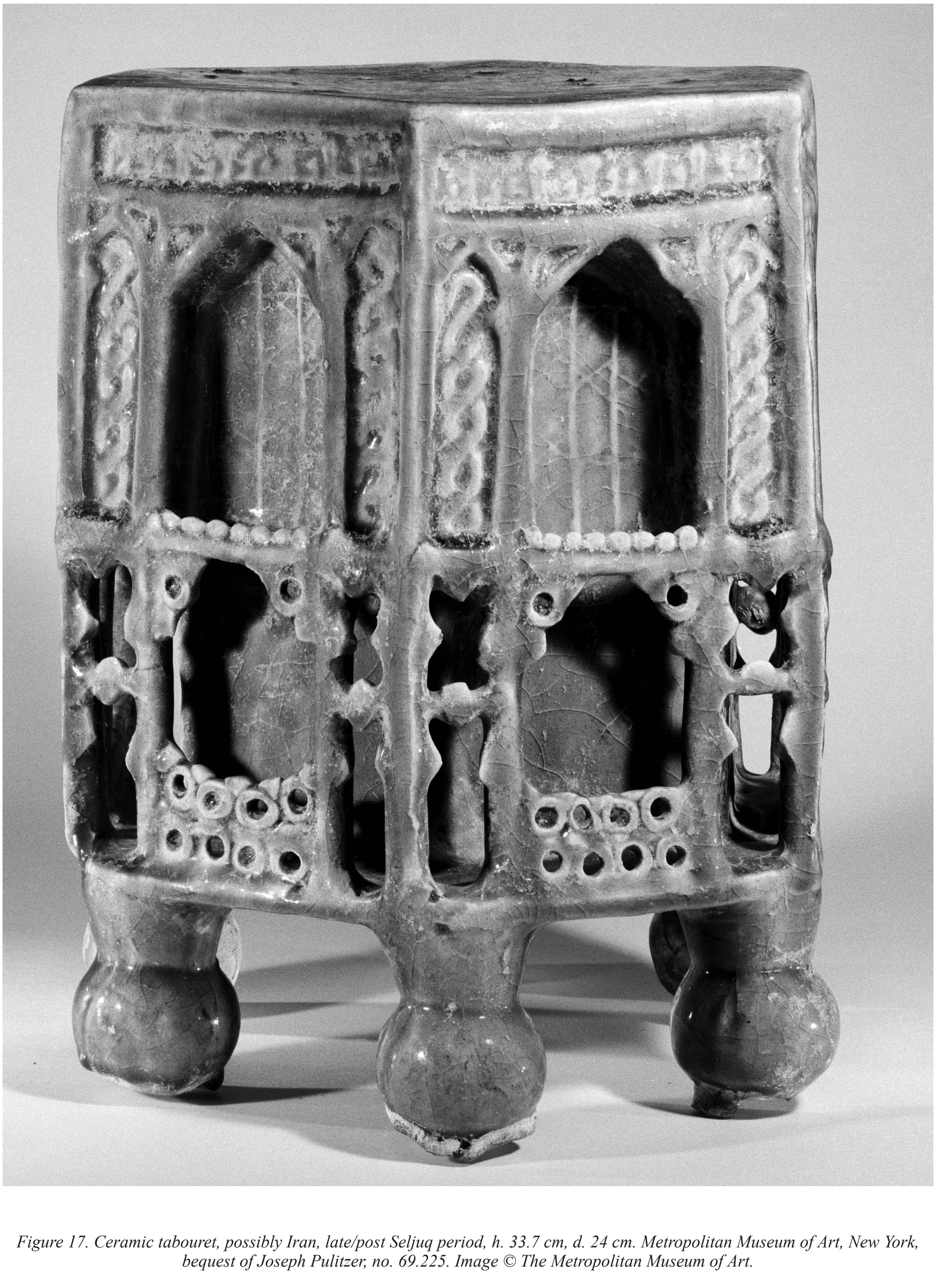

Figure 17. Ceramic tabouret, possibly Iran, late/post Seljuq period, h. 33.7 cm, d. 24 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, bequest of Joseph Pulitzer, no. 69.225. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

of a pavilion, which would clearly not be possible if it were not largely flat.[46] I would argue that the flat-topped form of the unadorned polygonal table probably prompted an association with garden architecture in the minds of the craftsmen, and it is most likely this that provided the impetus for the architectural vocabulary of decoration that developed upon these objects.

Conclusions: Kitsch and the Functional Object

There are a great number of individual motifs on both the Iranian and the Syrian tabourets that could be argued as imitative of, or derived from, architecture. Windows, balustrades, arches, colonettes and columns, *muqarnas*, *iwan*s, steps and grilles are all there in abundance, and the possibility for comparisons with isolated motifs in surviving architecture and in painted depictions of architecture is enormous. What, then, could have motivated the inclusion of these miniaturised architectural elements on little tables and stands made of ceramic?

The intentions of the decoration are neither uniform nor straightforward across the entire group: compare the Syrian tabourets, which never lose the basic outline of a table even when they display explicitly architectural motifs, with the Iranian examples, which demonstrate some complex modelling and an emphasis on the representation of complete, if largely fantastic, miniaturised architectural schema. Ettinghausen believes that the Iranian examples were, like the Syrian tabourets, to be used as tables.[47] But is it also possible that their practical role may have come second to a more whimsical use, one that is reflected in the complex mix of miniature mimesis and decorative allusion that the Iranian examples in particular display? A purely conjectural suggestion is that they might have been employed in miniature gardens, either internal or external. Firdawsi, in the *Shahnama*, refers to artificial trees made of precious materials, a tradition going back to the Achaemenid period.[48] Corneille Le Brun recorded that in Safavid Iran gifts of miniature gardens and houses made of wax were presented to the ruler on certain festival days,[49] and similar productions in sugar and halva have been recorded in medieval texts.[50] Although these examples made from precious materials and even the more ephemeral substances of elite table-decoration come from a level of society some way above the original social site of the tabourets, there is no reason why the prosperous bourgeoisie might not have had their own aspirational versions of these fancy toys. A tradition that exalted a gold palm tree, studded with pearls and precious stones, or a miniature silver orchard 'planted with different types of trees'[51] might also find room to admire a more affordable model pavilion, adapted for use around the home.

The medieval Middle Eastern predilection for richly patterned textiles encompassed many floral and vegetal designs: Goitein remarks that the textiles recorded in the Geniza documents, reflecting the taste of the middle classes in medieval Cairo, were 'destined to give the house the look of a garden'.[52] Perhaps into this context we can imagine the tabourets as miniature pavilions in an ersatz textile garden. The garden carpets of early modern Iran are well known, and at least one ancient precedent for the surviving examples has been recorded:

> Sa'd found in al-Mada'in (Ctesiphon) the [carpet called] 'al-Qitf,' sixty cubits (*dhira'*) long by sixty cubits wide (*fi 'ard sittin dhira'an*); it is a one-piece carpet measuring one *jarib*. On it were [images of] paths like [those in] palaces and gemstones (*fusus*) [so arranged as to look like] rivers, and among this there was a monastery-like building (*ka al-dayr*). Within its borders were [designs that] looked like cultivated land in spring time, with herbaceous plants (*mubqilah*) woven in silk over stalks of gold [thread]. Its blossoms were of gold, silver, and the like. Its ground was rendered with gold, its richly coloured designs (*washyuhu*) with gemstones (*fusus*), its fruits with precious stones (*jawhar*), and its leaves of silk and gold paint (*ma' al-dhahab*). The Persians used to call it 'Khusrau's *Bahar*' [Khusrau's Spring], but the Arabs called it 'al-Qitf.' The [Persians] had prepared it for the winter when the flowers had ended, and when they wished to drink, they drank on it, imagining they were sitting in a garden.[53]

While one could imagine the Iranian examples in particular taking a mimetic role in a context such as this, it does not entirely explain the incorporation of architectural elements on the Syrian tabouret group. Rather, in these we see the addition of architectural elements as a decorative mode, a means of making a practical object more fancy and therefore more valuable. Within the Syrian tabourets, the use of architectural elements is more elliptic and less direct than it is amongst the Iranian group, connoting architecture without mimetically reproducing it, and highlighting complex relationships between architecture and furniture. But with both the Iranian and the Syrian tabourets, we face the same question: why did a mode of decoration that makes significant reference to architecture arise particularly with this specific group of objects? To put it another way, why should there be a demand for functional objects that allude to architecture in this rather whimsical manner?

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[46] Dominic P. Brookshaw, 'Palaces, Pavilions and Pleasure Gardens: the context and setting of the medieval majlis', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 6/2 (2003), p. 206.

[47] Ettinghausen, 'Introduction', p. 9.

[48] Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, 'Gardens', in *A Survey of Persian Art, vol. III: Architecture, Its Ornament, City Plans, Gardens*, 3rd edition, 2nd impression (Ashiya: SOPA, 1981), p. 1443

[49] Corneille Le Brun, *Voyages de Corneille le Brun par le Moscovie, en Perse et aux Indes Orientales, vol. I* (Amsterdam: Frères Wetstein, 1718), p. 191.

[50] For example, the 'pavilion' made from halva that decorated a table during a feast at the court of the Ghaznavid ruler Masud in 429/1038. See Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994:1040* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), p. 136.

[51] Al-Qaddumi, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, pp. 179 and 104.

[52] Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society, vol. IV: Daily Life*, p. xiii.

[53] Al-Qaddumi, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, p. 192.

There is in all of these objects an element that borders on the kitsch. It is of course problematic to transpose the term 'kitsch', with all its negative connotations, onto discussions of the visual culture of the medieval Middle East when that culture lies so far in time and space from the nineteenth-century German society that originally coined the term. Similarly, the cultural landscapes of medieval Syria and Iran could hardly be further from the concerns of most of the recent Postmodernist commentaries that concern themselves with the nature of kitsch, although one of the most striking aspects of kitsch is the extent to which it has evaded scholarly consensus as to its precise characteristics.[54] The category of kitsch – being itself born from value judgements that are inextricably linked with the social and economic structures of post-industrial societies – has generally been applied to historical art only as a derogatory term, indicative of a style that has passed its prime and become sterile, repetitive and sometimes downright absurd.[55] But if one tries for a moment to shed the most negative images of this form of received bad taste – forget bathtubs in the shape of cockle shells and pepper grinders in the shape of the Eiffel Tower – and contemplate the nature of kitsch without making value judgements linked to contemporary social mores, it may become a useful tool for thinking about the tabourets. As Jean Baudrillard has remarked, one of the fundamental characteristics of kitsch is the production of objects that borrow the forms of other, unrelated things:

> To the aesthetics of beauty and originality, kitsch opposes its aesthetics of simulation: it everywhere reproduces objects smaller or larger than life; it imitates materials (in plaster, plastic, etc.); it apes forms or combines them discordantly; it repeats fashion without having been part of the experience of fashion.[56]

This last is perhaps harsher than the tabourets deserve: I do not propose that these objects should be regarded as being without artistic merit or historical interest because they contain elements of kitsch. Rather, I would suggest that their very kitsch-ness is a key part of their interest, both historically and visually. And these are not the trash of the medieval period: these must have been quite expensive objects in their day, made well enough to have survived, after a fashion, through many centuries. But not only do they appear to have been made in at least partial imitation of wooden examples (the balusters of the Syrian examples being a case in point), and thus already fit one of Baudrillard's criteria for kitsch; they also replicate and reconfigure the forms of architecture in miniature, apparently to purely decorative ends. In doing so they allow us a window onto the world of taste in the medieval Middle East.

Acknowledgments:

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[54] A useful and not unsympathetic attempt at delineating different types of kitsch and interrogating their motives can be found in Gilo Dorfles, *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969).

[55] Ancient Rome has come in for the lion's share of this kind of criticism: see for example Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Social Spread of Roman Luxury: Sampling Pompeii and Herculaneum', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 58 (1990), pp. 145–192, especially pp. 184–186 ('From Luxus to Kitsch'). See also a more recent response to this categorisation in Paul Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, trans. D.L. Schneider (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 21. An interesting study by Sam Binkley ('Kitsch as Repetitive System: A Problem for the Theory of Taste Hierarchy', *Journal of Material Culture*, 5/2 [2000], pp. 131–152) has attempted to move the discussion of kitsch away from a culturally stratified model of taste emulation, and towards an individual need for 'ontological security', although his argument is rooted in an assumed modern condition of disembeddedness and thus is hard to apply to historical material.

[56] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 111.

A Symbolic *Khassakiyya*: Representations of the Palace Guard in Murals and Stucco Sculpture

Melanie Gibson

During the course of the ninth century the formation of the Islamic army changed. From the time of caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 189–218 H/813–833 CE) and his brother al-Mu'tasim (r. 218–227/833–842), the caliphal army was no longer composed of Arab soldiers as had been the case during the initial stages of conquest; the core was instead formed from a praetorian guard of Turkish slave soldiers (*ghulam*; pl. *ghilman*). The military prowess of these soldiers was legendary; their loyalty remained exclusive to the ruler rather than to the state and they could be counted on to give their lives in his defence.[1] They were paid directly from the ruler's personal treasury, lived within the palace complex and were issued with ceremonial uniforms, arms, equipment and horses.[2] They were trained primarily in the martial arts but also in the manners of the court, and during occasions of court ceremonial flanked the ruler wearing special dress and armour. One of the earliest references, from the tenth- century historian al-Mas'udi, describes the ruler's personal retinue as *ghilman min khawassa,* that is, soldiers of the special corps, from the Arabic root *khassa* (خص) which means to be special or singled out.[3] By the Mamluk period this elite corps was given official status and termed *al-khassakiyya*; its officers were admitted into the sultan's presence at all times and were distinguished by their coats with brocaded bands and permission to bear a sword.[4]

Al-Mas'udi recounts that Ya'qub ibn al-Layth (r. 247–265/861–879), founder of the Saffarid dynasty, had a personal guard of two thousand soldiers who paraded beside the throne on ceremonial occasions, richly clothed and armed with gold and silver shields, swords and maces. Selected members of this personal retinue played a more intimate role and slept in a tent pitched behind his own, close enough for him to be able to call them to attend to him.[5] Hilal ibn al-Muhassin ibn Ibrahim al-Sabi, a chancery secretary in tenth-century Baghdad, wrote that the caliph al-Ta'i (r. 363–381/974–991) sat on a throne in front of a curtain in the ceremonial courtyard surrounded by a hundred of his guards, who were dressed in 'coloured garments, belts, and swords with trappings studded with jewellery. In their hands they carried clubs and battle-axes'.[6]

The historian Bayhaqi gives a detailed description of a court ceremony that took place in 429/1038 when Mahmud of Ghazni inaugurated his new palace with its elaborate golden throne, which had taken three years to construct:

> All around the hall, standing against the panels, were the household ghulams (*ghulaman-i khassagi*) with robes of Saqlatun, Baghdadi and Isfahani cloth, two-pointed caps, gold-mounted waist sashes, pendents and golden maces in their hands. On the dais itself, to both left and right of the throne, were ten ghulams, with four-sectioned caps on their heads, heavy, bejewelled waist sashes and bejewelled sword belts. In the middle of the hall were two lines of ghulams; one line was standing against the wall, wearing four-sectioned caps. In their hands they held arrows and swords, and they had quivers and bow-cases. There was another line, positioned down the centre of the hall, with two-pointed caps, heavy, silver-mounted waist sashes, pendents and silver maces in their in their hands.[7]

To reinforce the authority of the sovereign, and to symbolise his presence even in his physical absence, a tradition developed of displaying a second, inanimate guard along the walls of the throne room, rendered in paint, stone or stucco. The earliest examples of this type of symbolic display are found within Achaemenid palaces: at Susa and Persepolis ranks of life-size archers and guards were depicted in stone and glazed brick along the walls of the *apadana* (audience hall), and it has been suggested that these were images of the imperial guard of Darius I, described as 'the Immortals' by Herodotus.[8] When Ernst Herzfeld discovered the Jawsaq al-Khaqani' palace in Samarra he observed several fragmentary frescoes in the main audience chamber showing standing figures dressed in patterned coats with elaborate belts and bearing swords: these can almost certainly be identified as images of the ruler's bodyguard.[9]

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[1] David Ayalon has collected a list of twelve statements dating from the ninth to eleventh centuries that attest to the military prowess of the *ghilman*. See David Ayalon, 'The Mamluks of the Seljuks: Islam's Military Might at the Crossroads', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 6/3 (1996), pp. 311–315.

[2] Clifford Edmund Bosworth, 'Recruitment, Muster and Review in Medieval Islamic Armies', in Vernon John Parry and Malcolm E. Yapp (eds), *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 62–63.

[3] Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar,* trans. and ed. C. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1861–1877), vol. 8, p. 53.

[4] David Ayalon, 'Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 15 (1953), pp. 213–216.

[5] Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab*, p. 53. See also Clifford Edmund Bosworth, 'The Armies of the Saffarids', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 31/3 (1968), pp. 544–546.

[6] Hilal al-Sabi, *Rusum dar al-khilafah (The rules and regulations of the 'Abbasid court*), trans. Elie A. Salem (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1977), p. 65.

[7] Abu'l Fazl Bayhaqi, *Ta'rikh-i Mas'udi*, quoted in Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994–1040* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), p. 136.

From the Ghaznavid period, visually corroborating Bayhaqi's textual description of the *ghulaman-i khassagi*, are displays of military figures painted along the inner walls of the most monumental and highly decorated of the chambers – probably the audience hall – in the southern palace of Lashkari Bazar (initiated by Mahmud, r. 388–421/998–1030, and completed by his successor Mas'ud I in 428/1036). Forty-four painted guards survive but the original scheme probably numbered sixty or more (fig. 1).[10] The guards seem to be in a rural setting with foliage and birds in the background; they are shown frontally with their beardless faces in three-quarter profile, their heads encircled by haloes, and looking towards the point where the ruler would have been seated. The upper sections of the heads are damaged and the exact form of the headdress cannot be construed. They wear long, brightly-coloured *qaba*s (double-breasted coats) in fabrics of varied patterns embroidered with *tiraz* bands, over boots; the coats are fixed on the left side and belted at the waist with a variety of straps, while the pendants referred to by Bayhaqi are attached to the belts. Each rests the shaft of a weapon on his right shoulder; the upper parts are partially damaged but are recognisable as maces.

From the time of the Seljuqs and their successor states, the nature of this type of representation was subtly altered: instead of massed ranks of attendants, each one more or less identical to the next in terms of costume and regalia, the depictions were of individual officers as defined by their specific attributes. It seems that in this period the institution of the *khassakiyya* was formalised and demarcations of rank came to be indicated by a personal emblem.

Mamluk historians use the word *rank* to describe the blazon and we have a profusion of material evidence of such insignia in the Mamluk period, but almost no textual evidence; L.A. Mayer, whose work *Saracenic Heraldry* was one of the first to identify and classify Mamluk heraldic blazons, based his understanding on a text describing the custom of the Khwarazmshah ruler Muhammad ibn Tekesh (r. 596–617/1200–1220) who rewarded officers in his retinue with these emblems:

> [T]he emblem of the secretary (*dawadar*) is the pen-box, and of the armour-bearer (*silahdar*) the bow, and of the superintendent of stores (*tishtdar*) the ewer, and of the master of the robes (*jamdar*) the napkin, and the emblem of the marshal (*amir akhur*) is the horseshoe, and the emblem of the *jawish* is a golden *qubbah*.[11]

The *Kutadgu Bilig* ('Wisdom of royal glory') is a long didactic poem written in Turkish and presented to Tavghach Bughra Khan, the Karakhanid ruler of Kashgar, in 462/1069–70.[12] Its author was awarded the title *khass hajib*, meaning that he was made special or privy chamberlain, one of the ranks within the *khassakiyya*. The text counselled the sovereign on how to rule with wisdom and justice, together with more pragmatic aspects of court etiquette. There are ten sections outlining the qualifications of the prince, the vizier and various members of his select retinue; for example, the cup-bearers were required to be:

> beardless boys with faces like full moons and bodies like saplings, thin-waisted and broad-shouldered, with black hair and white complexions and red cheeks – in short like statues! Then they should be outfitted with garments of green and blue and red and yellow silk so they will have a suitable appearance as they offer the trays.[13]

Only a few years later the vizier Nizam al-Mulk was requested by his Seljuq sovereign Malikshah to compile a handbook on the rules and conduct of government, which he named *Siyar al-muluk* ('Manners of the kings').[14] Like the *Kutadgu Bilig*, the text deals with many practical aspects of ruling and includes a passage on the system of training in the *khassakiyya* that explains how its members earned their insignia by gradual advancement within the ranks:

> Pages were given gradual advancement in rank according to their length of service and general merit … After serving for a year with a horse and whip, in his third year he was given a belt to gird on his waist. In the fourth year they gave him a quiver and bow-case which he fastened on when he mounted. In his fifth year he got a better saddle and a bridle with stars on it, together with a cloak and a club which he hung on the club-ring. In the sixth year he was made a cup-bearer or water-bearer and he hung a goblet from his waist. In the seventh year he was a robe-bearer. In the eighth year they gave him a single-apex, sixteen-peg tent and put three

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[8] John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (eds), *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia* (London: British Museum, 2005), figs 27–33, 51–52.

[9] Ernst Herzfeld, *Die Malereien von Samarra* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1927), plates LXVII–LXXII.

[10] Daniel Schlumberger, 'Le Palais Ghaznévide de Lashkari Bazar', *Syria*, 29 (1952), plate XXXI, figs 1–3.

[11] L.A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 4. See also Scott Redford, 'A Grammar of Rum Seljuk Ornament', *Mésogeios-Méditerranée: histoire, peuples, langues, cultures*, 25–26 (2005), pp. 286–289.

[12] Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans. Robert Dankoff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[13] Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, p. 136.

[14] Since Charles Schefer translated the Persian text in 1891 this book has been known as the *Siyasat-nama* ('Book of Government'), however its title is quoted in Persian literature as *Siyar al-muluk*. Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al-muluk or Siyasat Nama*, trans. Hubert Darke (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002), p. xii.

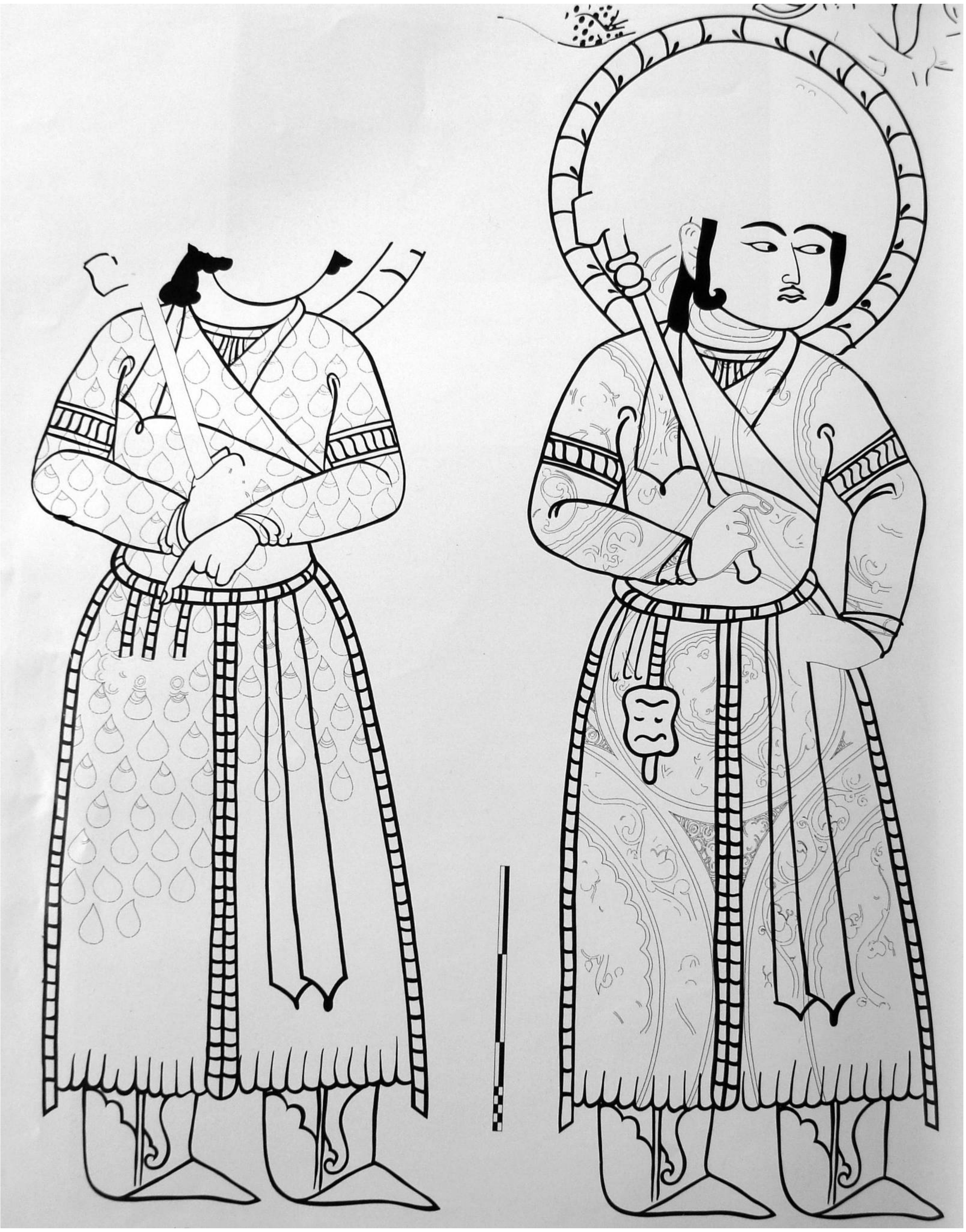

Figure 1. Wall painting from the audience hall of the palace of Lashkari Bazar. After Daniel Schlumberger, Lashkari Bazar: une Résidence Royale Ghaznévide et Ghoride, Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Française, XVIII *(Paris: Boccard, 1978) vol. 1, plate 123.*

> newly bought pages in his troop; they gave him the title of tent-leader and dressed him in a black felt hat decorated with silver wire and a cloak made at Ganja. Every year they improved his uniform and embellishments and increased his rank and responsibility until he became a troop-leader, and so on until he became a chamberlain. [15]

Just as in earlier periods, these textual descriptions of the *khassakiyya* were reinforced by artistic representations. Two Seljuq-period constructions contain stone reliefs depicting soldiers identifiable by the emblems they display as members of the ruler's elite corps. A bridge spanning the Tigris at Hasankeyf, built in 510/1116–7 by Qara Arslan, has mostly collapsed but on the four upstream walls of the two main piers are five reliefs of single human figures carved on vertical blocks and set into the middle course.[16] Estelle Whelan concluded that each of the four walls originally contained two reliefs and thus eight figures altogether. On the western pier is a standing human figure wearing a caftan, boots and *sharbush*; his arms are bent and rest on a straight object, possibly an arrow or mace. On the inner wall the figure rests on a bow, and another holds a bird.[17]

A very distinctive and unusual arched niche excavated in 1938 at Sinjar in the Jazira is all that remains of what was probably a ruler's pavilion or palace.[18] The site, known as Gu' Kummet, contained a recess with a semi-dome covered with *muqarnas.* Framing the arch was a continuous frieze of small lobed alcoves with very distinctive detailing; a ribbon of carved stone delineates each opening, forming a loop at the apex before outlining the horizontal base of the arch above. The interiors of the niches were carved with stylised foliate scrolls alternating with eight royal attendants, carved in deep relief and projecting from the background (fig. 2).[19] Although the figures are small, the details of costume and headdress are identifiable: they are shown wearing a knee-length *qaba* with a belt from which various pouches or tassels are suspended, and each one carries a different attribute and wears a different form of headdress. Along the vertical sides one figure holds a straight pole with a pointed terminal directly in front of his body (fig. 2a), a second holds a polo stick diagonally, a third rests a mace on his shoulder and a fourth holds a curved sword. The figures in the outer corners each hold a beaker and a napkin (fig. 2b) and the two placed closest to the apex face one another and each holds a bow diagonally across the body, forming an arch (fig. 2c). The small alcove directly over the apex of the arch mirrors the larger alcove below and has *muqarnas* in the miniature semi-dome. When the site was further excavated in the 1960s it was found that the niche was installed in the back wall of a two-room annexe and fragments of marble and tile decoration were found in the first room, which could thus be construed as an ante-room leading into the throne room.[20] The arched recess framed by its symbolic *khassakiyya* was probably the alcove into which the throne was placed. Whelan suggested it was constructed for one of the Zangid rulers of Sinjar, thus dating the niche to c. 566–617/1170–1220, or their Ayyubid successor al-Malik al-Ashraf who maintained a residence there until 626/1229.[21]

A similar arch framed with alcoves containing human figures forms the façade of a chapel within the monastery of Mar Behnam, sited about thirty-two kilometres southwest of Mosul and datable to *c.* 560/1164. The niches have the same raised and lobed outlines which loop over at the apex to form the base of the next niche, but the figurines within wear cowls over their heads and hold crucifixes identifying them as priests or monks (fig. 3).[22] The geographical proximity of these buildings would seem to indicate that this style of arch was characteristic of the architecture of the Jazira region and this is borne out by two more examples. The first is the mihrab of a mosque in Mosul with an inscription dating it to Jumada al-Awwal 543/ September–October 1148. There is some confusion over the precise identity of the builder of this mosque. He is named as Nur al-Din Mahmud Zangi (r. 541–569/1147–1174) by Gerald Reitlinger, and as his brother Sayf al-Din Ghazi (r. 541–544/1146–1149) by Herzfeld and Friedrich Sarre.[23] The latest known example decorates the entrance to a tomb built by Badr al-Din Lu'lu' in 645/ 1248.[24]

In the Iranian world stucco (*gach*) was used as architectural decoration from as early as the Achaemenid period; cheap to make and quick to apply, it was used to transform large areas of brick construction into highly decorated surfaces. The technique of stucco revetment and particularly of three-dimensional stucco sculpture was used to great effect in several Umayyad royal residences, notably the bath hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar which displayed a ruler figure in Persian dress as well as many female attendants.[25] The technique was revived in the Seljuq period and a number of almost life-size stucco sculptures, together with other architectural

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[15] *Ibid*., pp. 103–104.

[16] The projected Ilisu dam across the Tigris river will flood the town and bridge of Hasankeyf. Silke Jelkic, 'Tigris Dam will Flood Historical Sites', *The Epoch Times* [accessed 18 May 2011], http://www.the epochtimes.com/n2/world/tigris-river-dam-cultural-site-6082.html.

[17] Estelle Whelan, 'Representations of the Khassakiyah and the Origins of Mamluk Emblems', in Priscilla Soucek (ed.), *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), pp. 219–222, figs 9–12.

[18] In 1960 the niche was removed and installed in the National Museum in Baghdad, where it hopefully still remains.

[19] Whelan, 'Representations of the Khassakiyah', pp. 219–222, figs 1–8.

[20] Estelle Whelan, *The Public Figure: Political Iconography in Medieval Mesopotamia* (London: Melisende, 2006), pp. 410–411.

[21] Whelan, 'Representations of the Khassakiyah', p. 222.

[22] *Gertrude Bell Archive* [online], photograph M_020. University of Newcastle [accessed 18 May 2011], http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk. See also Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture: 650–1250* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), fig. 479.

[23] Gerald Reitlinger, 'Medieval Antiquities West of Mosul', *Iraq*, 5, (1938), p. 153. Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat-und Tigris-Gebiet* (Berlin 1911–1920) vol. 2, pp. 221–222, plate 5.

[24] The tomb was built for Imam ibn Hassan Awn al-Din. For images see Imam Awn al-Din Mashhad, *Archnet Digital Library* [accessed 2 June 2011], http://archnet.org /library/sites/one-site.jsp?site_id=7740.

[25] Robert William Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar: An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), plates LV–LVII.

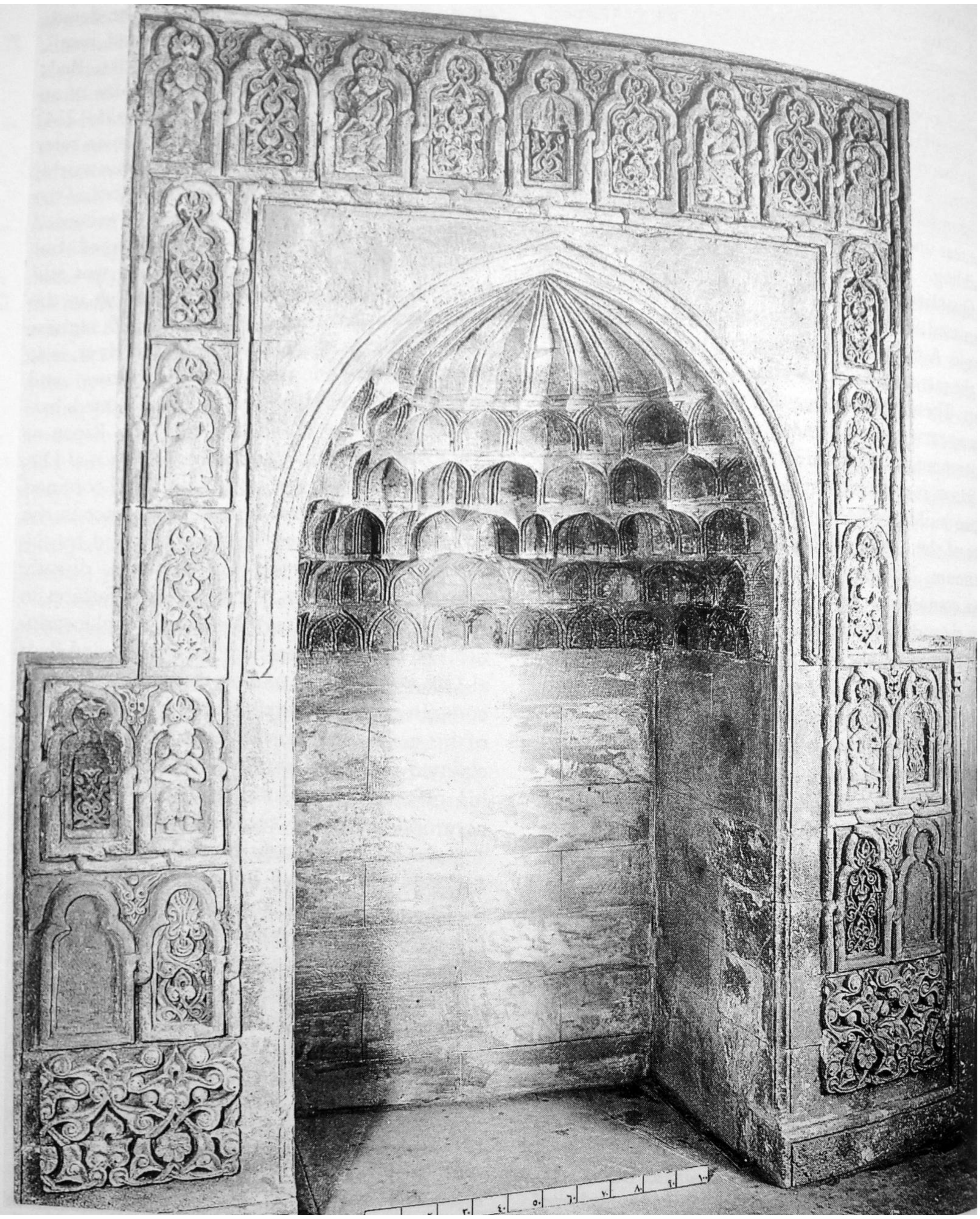
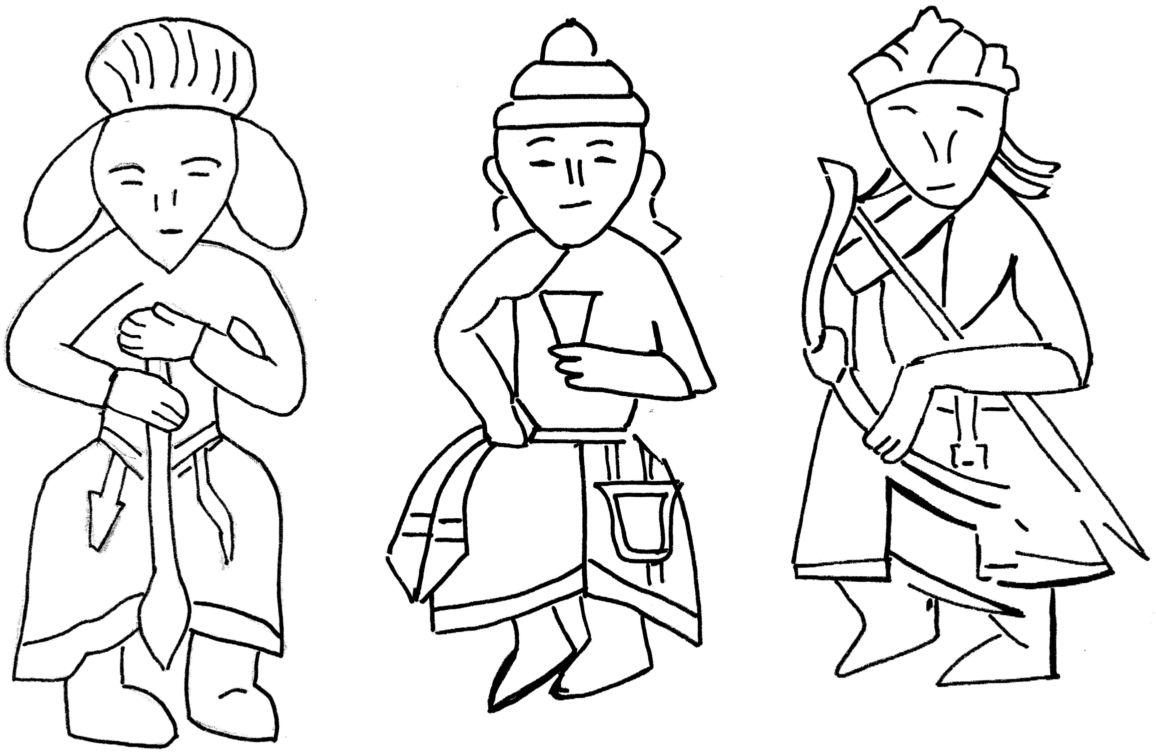


Figure 2. Carved stone niche from Gu’Kummet, Sinjar. Iraq Museum, Baghdad. After Robert Hillenbrand, Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, Meaning *(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), fig. 287, p. 420.*



Figures 2a, b, c. Left to right: lance-bearer, cup-bearer and archer from Gu'Kummet, Sinjar. All drawings by the author.

elements made of moulded plaster, were found at Rayy, an important mercantile city made capital by Tughril Beg in 434/1042–3. The sculptures were large (the most complete example surviving measures 144.8 centimetres in height) but were not designed for display in the round; they were made with flat undecorated back surfaces and would have been secured to the walls. They were not carved but moulded out of plaster, which is an excellent material for casting; plaster expands while drying and then contracts slightly just before hardening completely, which facilitates its extraction from the mould. When dry the surface was painted, and there are remains of black, blue and red pigments, together with traces of gilding, on all of the surviving sculptures.[26]

Nine surviving stucco figures represent young male retainers from the *khassakiyya*, or possibly members of the ruling family. Two are in the Metropolitan Museum (figs 4 and 5); three are in the Victoria and Albert Museum (figs 6, 7 and 8);[27] one is in the Detroit Institute of Arts;[28]

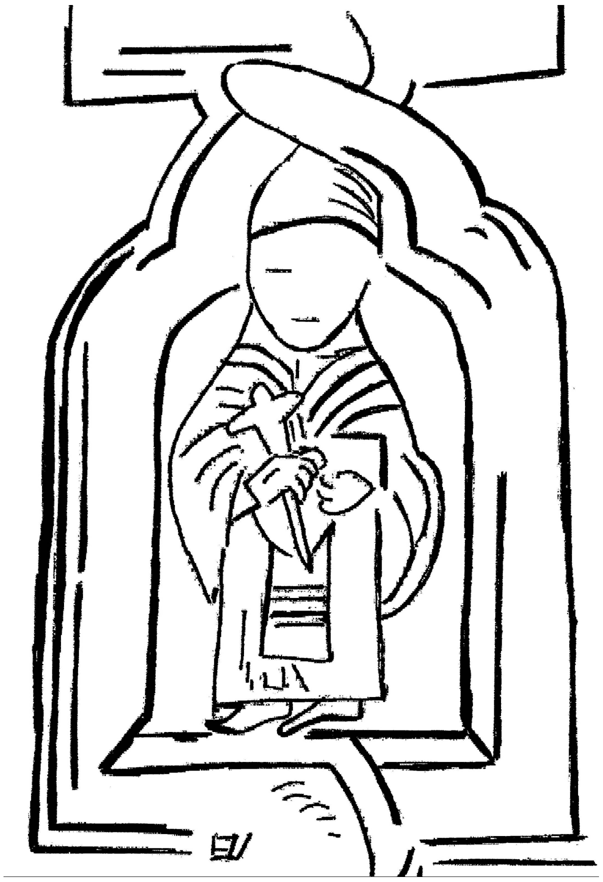


Figure 3. Hooded figure with crucifix within the surround of the façade of the chapel at the Mar Benham monastery. After Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, Archäologische Reise im Euphrat und Tigris *(Berlin: De Gruyter, 1911) vol. 4, fig. 247.*

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[26] Raman analysis on a stucco mask that formed part of the Marling bequest of stucco sculptures to the Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. A.23-1928, found the red to be vermilion and the black carbon.

[27] These sculptures, together with two fragmentary stucco pieces of a harpy and a face, form part of the Marling bequest at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Donated to the museum in 1928 by Sir Charles Marling, British envoy to Tehran from 1908 to 1918, there is unfortunately no record of the provenance of the objects, although the similarity in the modelling and appearance of the figures suggests they were intended for the same site.

[28] Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 25.64: see Rudolf M. Riefstahl, 'Persian Islamic Stucco Sculptures', *The Art Bulletin*, 13/4 (1931), fig. 5. This standing figure wears a long cobalt-coloured *qaba* with a multi-stranded necklace, earrings and a jewelled headband. The left arm is held out towards the viewer but is broken off at the elbow.

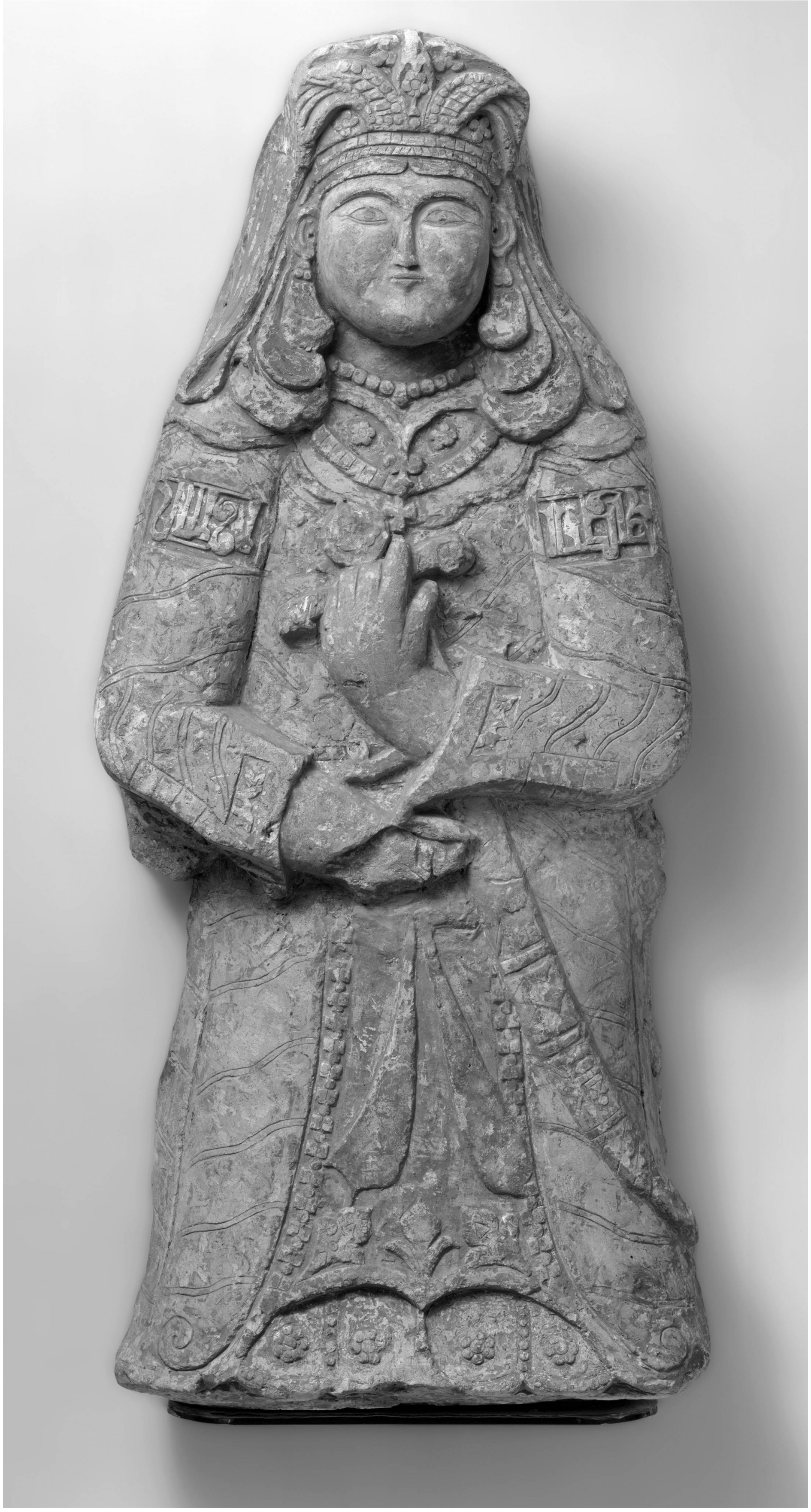

Figure 4. Royal guard with sword. Stucco with traces of red, orange, blue, white and black paint. Iran, possibly Rayy, twelfth century. 144.8 x 49.5 x 24.1 cm. Metropolitan Museum, 57.51.18: Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects, Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956. Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

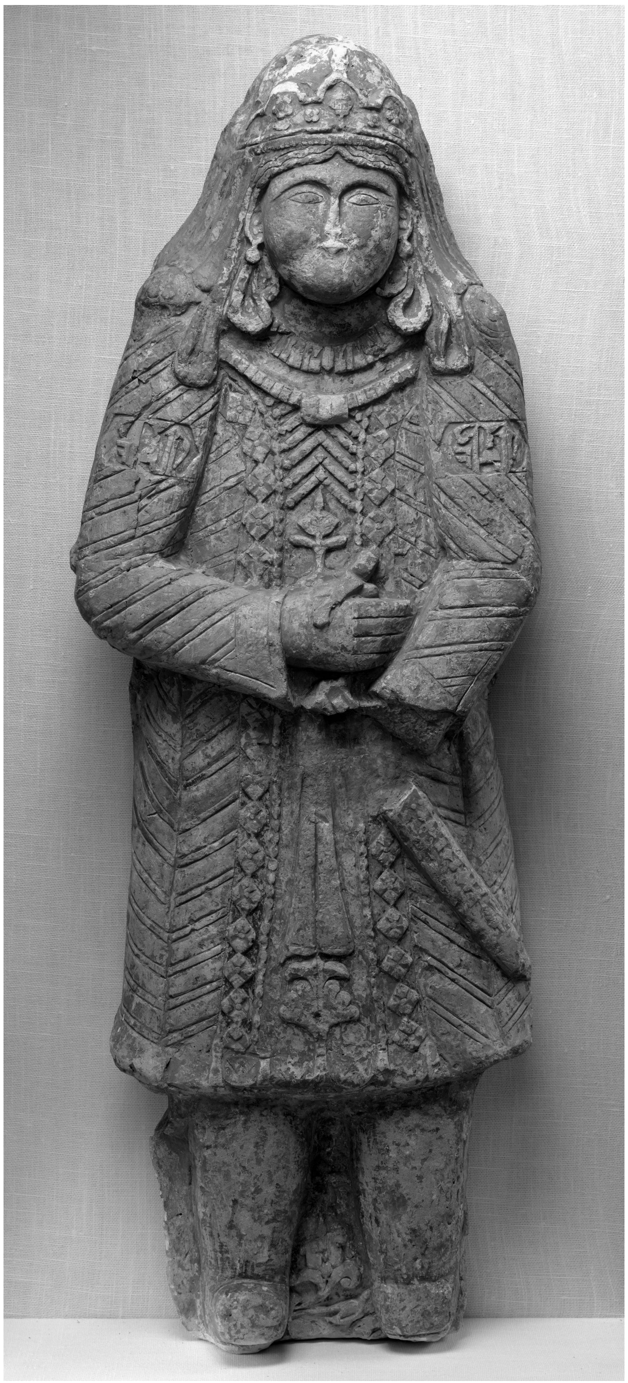

Figure 5. Royal guard with sword. Stucco with traces of red, orange and blue, white and black paint. Iran, possibly Rayy, twelfth century. Height 119.4 cm. Metropolitan Museum 67.119: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wolfe, 1967. Image © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

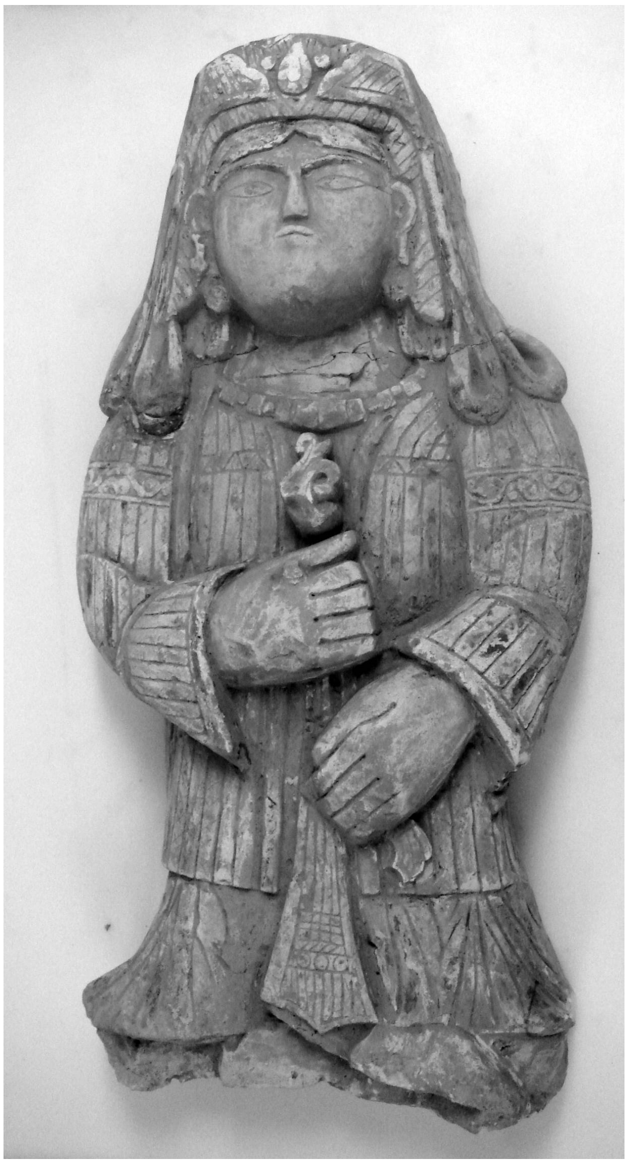

Figure 6. Royal guard with 'sceptre' in right hand and mandil in left. Stucco with traces of red, blue and black paint, Iran, possibly Rayy, twelfth century. 47 x 22.8 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum A.22.1928. Image © Melanie Gibson, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

one is in the Worcester Art Museum; [29] another is in the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait; [30] and the ninth is in the Khalili Collection, London.[31] The sculptures were made to be seen frontally and they stare out challengingly at the observer; the description of the cup-bearer in the *Kutadgu Bilig* comparing the young attendants to statues seems

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[29] Worcester Art Museum, inv. no. 1932.24. This standing figure wears a *qaba* with a necklace, earrings and headdress.

[30] Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, inv. no. LNS 2 ST. The surface of this statue is damaged around the head and neck but the cobalt colour of the coat is visible.

[31] Khalili Collection, London inv. no. MXD 302. This figure wears a short coat with *tiraz* bands on both sleeves and a three-line text panel on the left breast. The headdress appears to be a *sharbush* with a triangular front plaque. The arms and legs are splayed in a running posture.

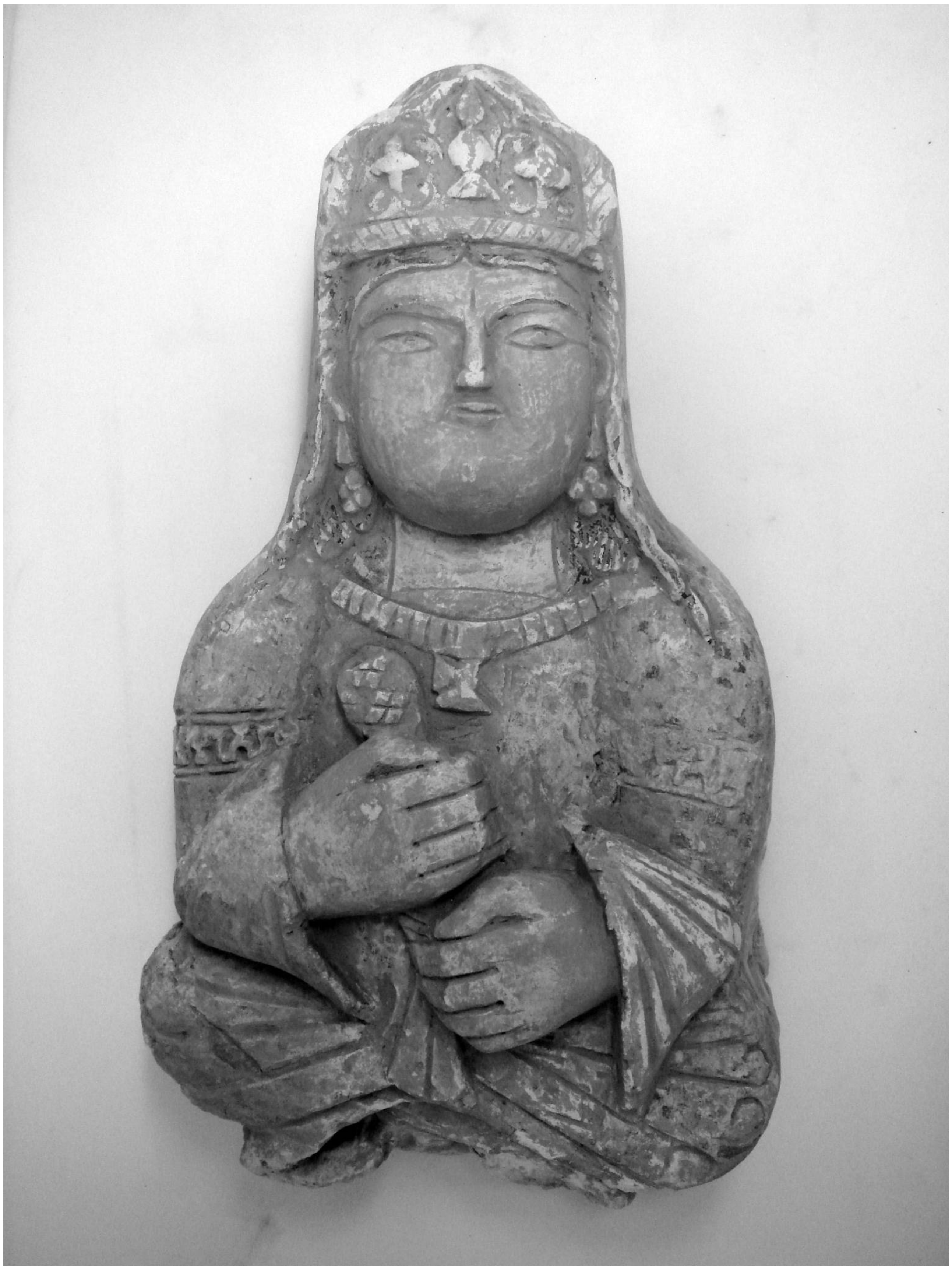

Figure 7. Seated attendant with 'sceptre' in both hands. Stucco with traces of red and blue paint. Iran, possibly Rayy, twelfth century. 40 x 22.3 cms. Victoria and Albert Museum A.20.1928. Image © Melanie Gibson, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

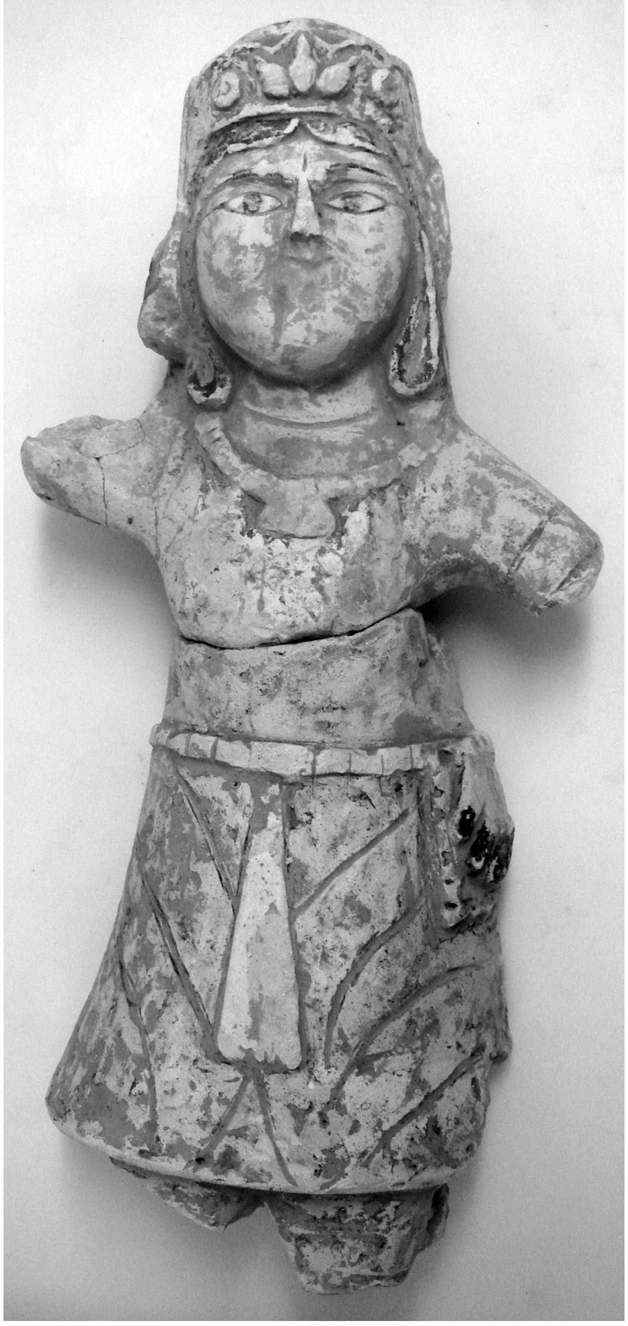

Figure 8: Standing falconer with broken arms. Stucco with traces of red, blue and black paint. Iran, possibly Rayy, twelfth century. 51.5 x 24.8 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum A.21.1928. Image © Melanie Gibson, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

particularly apt.[32] Their costumes and headdress, jewellery and armour were moulded in detail and coloured: details of physiognomy and hair were painted in black while the costumes were coloured blue and red, and details such as the *tiraz* bands were gilded. They wear coats of patterned fabric with elaborate borders which are shown open at the front to reveal the flaring ends of the sash knotted at the waist; the sleeves are decorated with *tiraz* bands and on two the words *al-mulk* ('sovereignty') can be read. The headdresses are particularly large and striking: a three-winged tiara, a crenellated crown and headbands with large central diadems. Only one of the figures appears to be wearing the *sharbush*, the distinctive stiff cap with a tall triangular front worn by the Turkish military elite, but the tiaras must represent ceremonial rather than everyday headgear. The jewellery includes strings of pearls, chains with hanging pendants, often in the shape of a cross, and earrings with elaborate tasselled elements.

Each of the figures holds an object: in only two instances is this a weapon, and in most cases it is difficult to identify. Two grip the hilt of a sword which extends diagonally to the side of the body (figs 4 and 5); two others hold sceptre-like objects, one with a simple rounded end and another with a swirling finial (figs 6 and 7). The Worcester Art Museum figure also holds an object with a large rounded end in his right hand and tightens his left hand around something partly damaged; the Detroit figure holds the curved handle of an object that is broken off; the Kuwait figure holds a flared beaker in front of his chest in his right hand and a rosette-like object hangs from his left; and the Khalili figure holds his arms outstretched with an object, now broken off, grasped in each hand. The sculpture in figure 8 stands with arms outstretched and now broken; from his sash hangs a square pouch with scalloped edges and a black glove which indicates that this was a falconer who no doubt once supported a bird of prey on his raised arm.

Not all of the sculptures of this type represent male figures. One androgynous creature in a flowing cobalt-coloured robe is shown in three-quarter view with the right hand extended.[33] The curved posture and extended arm of this figure relate it to the flying genii holding up a canopy over the ruler's head in the frontispieces of the *Kitab al-aghani* ('Book of songs') created for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' c. 1218–1219.[34] Another shows a seated woman with her arms planted firmly on her knees and a naked child resting within the curve of her right arm;[35] this maternal image, infrequent in Islamic art, finds an echo in a group of contemporary ceramic figurines representing a woman suckling a naked child, and must have held a particular significance at this time.[36]

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[32] 'Beardless boys with faces like full moons and bodies like saplings, thin-waisted and broad-shouldered with black hair and white complexions and red cheeks.' (Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, p. 136.)

[33] Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, I.2658. See Volkmar Enderlein *et al.*, *Museum of Islamic Art: State Museums of Berlin Prussian Cultural Property* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Phillip von Zabern, 2003), p. 55.

[34] All six surviving paintings show flying creatures holding a canopy over the head of the ruler, Badr al Din Lu'lu', whether he is seated on a cushion, on a throne or on horseback; see illustration in Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), p. 65.

[35] Sold at Christie's, *Arts of the Islamic and Indian Worlds*, 31 March 2009, lot 181.

Since none of the stucco sculptures has survived in situ it is not clear exactly how they were arranged within their architectural setting, but the curved stance of the Berlin figure suggests that it formed part of a larger composition framing the ruler, surrounded by members of the *khassakiyya* and possibly also accompanied by some female members of the court. One analogy is the image depicted on the frontispiece of a manuscript of the *Kitab al-diryaq* ('Book of antidotes'): this painting, probably made in Mosul c. 596–622/1200–1225, is divided into three registers with the ruler occupying the central field.[37] He is surrounded by ten male figures holding different attributes: three carry swords with the hilt held upwards (a ceremonial rather than a practical posture), two carry polo sticks, one a spear, one a hawk, one a goose and one a beaker. Nine of the figures are fresh-faced beardless young men who wear a variety of caps; the ruler that they surround wears the more traditional *sharbush*, with a cone-shaped plaque on the front. The tenth figure is bearded and does not hold an object, and probably represents a senior member of the entourage. The bottom register shows a group of women riding on camels who probably represent the ruler's immediate family; one woman rides on a litter with a child beside her.

A monumental stucco panel in the Philadelphia Museum of Art shares its material – as well as similar proportions – with the independent stucco sculptures and probably gives the best indication of how they were once arranged.[38] In the past there has been some dispute over the authenticity of this panel but recent research appears to validate it.[39] The relief, apparently found at Rayy, is inscribed with the titles of Tughril II who died 591/1195; the panel depicts the ruler seated on a throne flanked by attendants, and with members of his *khassakiyya*, each one distinguished by a different attribute, ranged in a line below him. The inscription, which runs along the top of the panel, is raised in relief against a scrolling vegetal ground with traces of cobalt pigment. It reads *al-sultan, al-malik al-a'zam, al-malik Tughril, al-'alim, al-'adil, al-qadir* ('the sultan, the exalted king, the ruler Tughril, the learned, the just, the powerful'). The figure of Tughril is seated cross-legged on a throne with two vertical pillars that rest on lion masks, and an inscription running in a semi-circular band between the pillars reads: *al-malik al-muzaffar, al-ghazi*, ('the victorious king, the warrior'). He is dressed in a coat with a scrolling pattern embossed in relief and *tiraz* bands on the sleeves, worn over a belted tunic and trousers. He has two necklaces hanging around his neck, earrings hanging from his ears and a crenellated crown worn over a round cap. He holds a flaring beaker in his right hand and rests his left hand on his knee. In terms of costume and accessories the image of the ruler compares closely to the two standing stucco figures in the Metropolitan Museum (figs 4 and 5). Flanking Tughril are two proportionally smaller attendants; the one on his right holds a beaker and the one on his left a napkin and a spherical object. Ranged below the ruler is a row of eight attendants: six are dressed in the traditional belted caftan with boots and wear headdresses of the sharbush type. The figures on the extreme left and right wear short trousers and different headdresses that probably denote their lesser status; one holds a spear and the other an unidentifiable object.

The recess or dais on which the royal throne was placed symbolised the ruler even during times of his physical absence, and images of the *khassakiyya* must have evinced the same symbolic reference. The depiction of members of the ruler's personal retinue around the walls of the royal *diwan*, close to the throne, would have vigorously reinforced his universal presence in the same way that in the Umayyad period the stone *qalansuwa* suspended above the throne apse at Khirbat al-Mafjar declared the presence of the caliph whether he was physically present or not.[40] When the ruler was physically present, a display of inanimate guards standing as a backdrop to his flesh-and-blood corps would only emphasise his prestige and omnipotence. It seems no coincidence therefore that in the Qur'an the archetypal ruler Solomon is said to have commanded the *jinn* to make statues for him: 'The *jinn* made for Solomon whatever he pleased: shrines and statues (*tamathil*), basins as large as watering-troughs and built-in cauldrons'.[41]

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[36] To date seventeen examples are known, with wide variations in size and quality. All the figurines are hollow, glazed on the interior and have a wide opening with a lip at the top which suggests they were used as vessels. The finest example is in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, inv. no. I.2622. See Melanie Gibson 'The Enigmatic Figure: Ceramic Sculpture from Iran and Syria c. 1150-1250', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society*, 73 (2008–9), p. 41, fig. 4.

[37] Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, A.F.10, folio 1 recto. See Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 91.

[38] The panel measures 213.5 centimetres in height and 671 centimetres in length. See Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, *A Survey of Persian Art: from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Ashiya: SOPA, 1981), vol. 8, pl. 517. A second, somewhat smaller panel, measuring 152 by 344 centimetres, was recently sold at Christies (5 October 2010, lot 99), and was bought by the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar.

[39] Professor Renata Holod and Leslee Michelsen minutely examined this stucco panel, which is in the store of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and concluded that although it has been altered and restored, probably in the early twentieth century, it is fundamentally sound and dates from the medieval period.

[40] Richard Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic World: three modes of artistic influence* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 24–29.

[41] Qur'an 34:14.

THE NOTION OF TIME AND THE IMAGE OF PLACE: REFLECTIONS ON ISLAMIC GARDENS

Saeid Khaghani

In Iranian myth, when chess was first introduced to the vizier Buzurgmihr in the sixth century CE, he said he would devise another board game – backgammon – which would show the forces of the universe and man's life in a better way:[1]

> In it I will liken the board to the holy earth; its thirty days and nights; fifteen white pieces to fifteen days and fifteen black pieces to fifteen nights. I will further liken the throw of the dice to the heavenly bodies and the revolution of the earth … In this manner, the invention of backgammon will be a recreation of the world by God [Urmazd] and the movement of the pieces will be the same as the existence of people in the world: they collide with each other and leave the world. The next arrangement of the pieces, after the board is cleared once, is like the Resurrection day when all dead come to life again.[2]

Both the games of chess and backgammon represent life in a miniaturised battlefield – backgammon or, as it known in Persian, *takht-i nard*, literally means 'battle on the board' – although two different concepts govern the framing of action within these two games (fig. 1). Whereas chess can be taken to represent the Manichean concept of an inevitable conflict between light and darkness – the battle of good and evil (*Ahura* and *Ahriman*) – backgammon reflects the colliding of people in life itself. The battle of chess takes place on a chequered, neutral, black-and-white ground, here argued as signifying the days and nights of a linear conception of time, whereas backgammon represents an asymmetric, cyclical movement through time with an end point that returns to the original position. In contrast to chess, in which the use of quantifiable strategies in predictable situations defines the destiny of the battle, in backgammon destiny is defined only by knowing how to navigate through the movements of the heavens, or in other words by negotiating with fate.

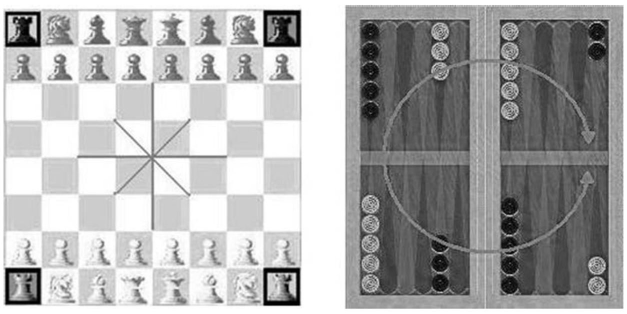

Figure 1. The games of chess and backgammon. All images are by the author.

Thus, the games represent two different conceptions of space and time. Both chess and backgammon are 'games of State'; that is, they are thought to have originated in courtly contexts. However, they signify different strategies through their use of two contrasting types of conceptual organisation.[3] In chess, movements take place through built positions, which are represented by the signs of corner castles, but in backgammon, the holding of position occurs through movement. In the former *place* is the frame of the action, in the latter *time*. These two games symbolise two different models of the social system, with their particular definitions of individuality, community and, in a sense, dwelling, occurring within a defined time/space frame.[4] Nevertheless, rather than viewing them as representations of two separate states or societies, they can be seen as simultaneous but situational frames of action within the same society. In this article, the possibility of using the image of backgammon to construct a temporal notion of place, particularly in relation to pre-modern Iranian constructions of built space and gardens, is the subject of investigation.

Destiny or fate – defined by heavenly bodies or, rather, by the outer forces of the universe – and the *cyclical* conception of time are two distinctive features of the microcosmic image of backgammon. Two different conceptions of time exist here: absolute time or destiny, and limited time or the cyclical turn. As Henry Corbin has noted, '*Mazdean* cosmogony tells us that time has two essential aspects: the time without shore, without origin (*Zervan-akanarak*), eternal time, and limited time or "the time of long domination"… essentially a time of return'.[5] The latter has the form of a cycle. In the visualisation of these two concepts in popular culture, the former is personified as a god-like being, while the latter is visualised as a circular voyage: these ideas will be explored below.

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[1] In this paper I have opted to use the term 'Islamic' to cover the overarching culture under discussion, although I remain aware of the problems of this type of generalisation.

[2] Iraj Bashiri, 'From the Hymns of Zarathustra to the Songs of Borbad', *Bashiri Working Papers on Central Asia and Iran* [accessed 4 May 2011], http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Zorobar/Zorobar.html. This is a translation of the story as it appears in Persian in Muhammad Taqi Bahar (ed.), *Mujmal al-tawarikh wa'l-Qisas* (Tehran: Khavar, 1318 [1939]), p. 75. For a version in Middle Persian see the same volume, pp. 299–306. For the history of these two games in Iran see Touraj Daryaee, 'Mind, Body, and the Cosmos: Chess and Backgammon in Ancient Persia', *Iranian Studies*, 35/4 (2002), pp. 281–312.

[3] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in a comparison between the two games of chess and go, consider only chess to be a 'state game', whereas, in Iranian culture, both chess and backgammon were held to be games of the court. For Deleuze and Guattari's comparison see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, trans. Brian Massumi (New York: Columbia University, 1986), p. 3.

[4] For the analogy between games and social structure in Arab culture see Fuad I. Khuri, *Tents and Pyramids: Games and Ideology in Arab Culture from Backgammon to Autocratic Rule* (London: Saqi, 1990).

First, we must consider absolute time as a determining force. The pre-Islamic Arab view of time or *dahr* ('long duration'), although it contradicted the new religion, continued to be observed in the Islamic world. It was personified as a being causing good and also bad fortune: '[t]ime has the connotation of Fate, which is not quite correct, since time here is conceived as the determining factor, not as being itself determined by some other power.'[6] On the other hand, in Zurvanised Mazdaism,[7] 'before anything existed, the heavens or the earth or any creation, *Zervan* or time existed'.[8] According to a short treatise in Persian from the thirteenth century or later, *'Ulama'-i Islam,* 'it is revealed that with the exception of time all the rest is created, while time itself is creator'.[9] The term *Zurvan* holds a twofold meaning, of which the first and the main meaning is that of destiny (*bakhsh*).[10] In popular literature this notion of time is characterised as a playful spinning roulette that marks the destiny of human beings through its unpredictable moves.[11] The terms *al-falak al-dawwar* in Arabic and *charkh-i gardun* in Persian, literally meaning 'whirling wheel', are the image of this model of time in popular culture, indicating 'fate' and 'the heavens'.[12]

The second conception of time is that of the cycle. To quote Corbin once more, this 'is not a time of an eternal return, but the time of a return to an eternal origin'.[13] It is this notion of limited time or cyclical time that finds visual and spatial expression in the built environment. The cyclical conception of time can be attributed to different models: one of these is the millennial cycle of the universe or age of the world. According to Mazdaean and Isma'ili beliefs, the cycle of the world is composed of twelve millennia that involve four different eons: '[d]eriving from the eternal time it [i.e. the returning time] returns to its origin'.[14] Another source of the cyclical conception of time can be seen in the moon's cycle, which forms a month of the lunar calendar; this is in turn composed of four supposedly sequential steps in the voyage of the moon, which form the four Semitic weeks of the month. The last and the most important source for the image of cyclical time, which has a more direct application in the cognition of place, is the annual cycle of the four seasons: this seasonal cycle is naturally most evident in an agricultural environment, and has shaped the Iranian solar calendar. The Iranian calendar is based around the seasonal changes of the Iranian plateau and Central Asia. The beginning of the year is marked by a natural phenomenon: the arrival of the sun at the vernal equinox.[15] *Nawruz* (literally meaning 'new day' or 'new time'; new year) is celebrated as the rebirth of the universe at the beginning of spring after a complete cycle of the seasons.[16] This seasonal conception of time is composed of four asymmetrical seasons – each with its own significance for a farming culture – that make the cycle of time heterogeneous. This quarterly reckoning of time connects the abstract notion of time to the visual domain in ways that will be explored below.

The common modern experience of a primarily sedentary life eliminates the notion of time from dwellings. Built space, with its connotations of permanency, stillness and borders, is actualised only by bracketing time as an influential factor in the formation of space: that is, by excluding signs of the passing of time. In this sense, change as the means of measuring the passage of time is translated into only the flexibilities at the margins that are possible in such a pre-defined territory. Time is linear and predictable. On the other hand, nomadic notions of dwelling, typically embodied in portable tents and other impermanent structures, represent a different possibility for the definition of time and space.[17] In nomadic dwellings the relation of time and space is reversed; it is space that is defined temporally and temporarily. The dwelling place is built with consideration of the changeable elements of the environment such as the season, sun and weather conditions. Owing to this fact, nomadic living spaces, rather than enclosing a defined space in order to create a stable, desirable condition, are opened out to chosen conditions. The nomadic notion of camping represents the creation of a neutral space, one that is transportable to desired locations. Transportability and temporality are the very basis upon which this notion of space is constructed.

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[5] Henry Corbin, 'Cyclical time in Mazdaism and Ismailism,' in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, Bollingen Series XXX/3 (New York: Pantheon, 1957), pp. 115–173, this quote from p. 117.

[6] William Montgomery Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London: Luzaq, 1948), p. 21.

[7] Sometimes also known as 'Zurvanite Zoroastrianism'; a branch of Zoroastrianism which holds Zurvan as its deity.

[8] Corbin, 'Cyclical Time', p. 129.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 128; see also Siamak Adhami, '"Olama-ye Eslam", *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* [accessed 4 May 2011], http://www.iranica.com/articles/olama-ye-eslam.

[10] Corbin, 'Cyclical Time', p. 129.

[11] Khaqani in his famous poem *Iwan-i Mada'in* ('The Arch of Mada'in') writes: گویی که نگون کرده است ایوان فلک وش را
حکم فلک گردان یا حکم فلک گردان

It seems that it has destroyed this heavenly portal [*Iwan*]*;*
The spinning heaven's command or the command of the Spinner of Heaven.
Afzal al-Din Khaqani Shirvani (b. 1127, d. between 1186–7 and 1199 CE), *Divan-i Khaqani Shirvani*, ed. Zia al-Din Sajjadi (Tehran: *Zavvar*, 1374 [1995]), p. 358.

[12] On the idea of time in Islamic thought see Gerhard Heinrich Böwering, 'Ideas of time in Persian mysticism', in Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh (ed.), *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 172–198; and Louis Massignon, 'Time in Islamic thought', in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time: papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, Bollingen Series XXX/3 (New York: Pantheon, 1957), pp. 108–115.

[13] Corbin, 'Cyclical Time', p. 118.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[15] Massoume Price, 'Iranian Calendar System: History and Origins', *Iran Chamber Society* [accessed 4 May 2011], http://www.iranchamber.com/calendar/articles/calendar_systems_origins.php. For a detailed history of the Iranian calendar see Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh, *Old Iranian Calendars* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1938), now available online at *Iran Chamber Society* [accessed 4 May 2011], http://www.iranchamber.com/calendar/articles/old_iranian_calendars1.php.

[16] On New Year and cyclical time, see Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 47–49.

[17] There are, of course, different nomadic patterns of life, and these cannot be categorised within one single notion.

The first thing that catches the eye in most of the traditional houses of Iran and Central Asia – though it is not exclusive to those areas – is the lack of specific furniture:[18] this is indicative of the lack of functionally divided spaces. While conventional understanding of an architectural complex would nowadays refer to the combination of functionally different spaces, traditional Iranian houses are largely fabricated from functionally parallel spaces that differ only in their form and spatial quality. Termed 'four-*iwan*' houses, these complexes present four distinct sides containing different types of space arranged axially around a central courtyard. Individual spaces are not named for their functions, since these are not definable, but are instead named after their form, their position within the complex, or, more importantly, their annual or seasonal time of use: summer or winter house, spring and autumn space, moonlight (night) place, etc.[19] In the large complexes of the wealthy, a family spends a part of the year in a section of the house: in other words, their movements inside the house are defined according to seasonal changes.[20] Here we may use the apparently oxymoronic expressions 'sedentary nomads' or 'nomadic citizens'.[21] This deconstructs the common notion of a sedentary 'taking place' or 'happening of place' as expounded by Martin Heidegger, which is the building of a permanent position.[22] Moving in harmony with the forces of nature or the universe, which can carry a negative connotation of fatalism, can also represent an affirmative understanding of the outer world. In an analogy with the games discussed above, this is like the more general but not completely controllable image of backgammon, rather than the snapshot of the universe shown in chess (fig. 1).

Not only is the house affected by seasonal changes; the daily movement of the sun gives the different sides of the courtyard house different qualities. Based on this, the movement inside the house takes place on the basis of four different 'geographical zones'. The extreme coldness of winter in comparison with the hot summer, the pleasant weather of spring and good but decaying climate of autumn; all of these are accounted for, in combination with the daily movement of the sun. The daily journey of the sun gives to the north inner face of a courtyard house permanent sunshine and to the south permanent cool shadow; to the west inner face comes a pleasant morning sun and to the east an unbearable afternoon heat. These factors drive the movement within the house to take place within a circular field of four geographical zones. Even nowadays Iranians call their traditional houses 'four-season' (*chahar-fasl*) houses, which implies courtyard buildings with proper space for all of the seasons of the year. Indeed, it would not be too much of an oversimplification to say that a quadripartite reckoning of the cycle of time has left its imprint on the layout of Iranian traditional houses (fig. 2).

The four-*iwan* or quadripartite plan is one of the major themes in Islamic architecture from Iraq to Central Asia.[23] This layout is common in many different types of architecture, as is demonstrated by the Persian names of those forms: *chahar-suffa* (four-platform), *chahar-taq* (four-vaulted roof), *chahar-su* (four-sided), *chahar-iwan* (four-*iwan*) and *chahar-bagh* (four-garden). This last is the layout of many royal gardens: a rectangular walled garden quartered by two streams intersecting at right angles, with a lofty pavilion at the centre. The *chahar-bagh* will be discussed below.[24] The extraordinary frequency with which the quadripartite theme recurs, across a wide variety of building types, suggests that a source for this plan must lie beyond the practical requirements of each individual building (fig. 3).

Different interpretations have sought to explain the common use of this four-square pattern in Iranian material culture. Inspired by the Hindu and Buddhist microcosmic image of the *mandala*, some interpretations have proposed a cosmological meaning.[25] In other suggestions, through a parallel analogy with the traditional concept of four primary elements, a structural view of the world is attributed to this four-square image. In addition, a symbolic understanding of the image of the cross tries to include this quadripartite outline as an archetypal image, one that is broader in scope than merely local interests.[26] There are several deficiencies to these last theories. First, the cross as an *icon* does not exist or hardly exists in Islamic material culture; secondly, local culture and literature do not show any traces of this theory. In addition, the comparisons with the Hindu temple or the church, an interpretation that comes from

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[18] For the influence of nomadic life on Iranian architecture see Bernard O'Kane, 'From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design', *Ars Orientalis*, 23 (1993), pp. 249–268.

[19] There are three groups of names for the spaces. The first of these is based on the time of use: 'winter' or 'warm house'; 'summer house'; 'spring' and 'autumn sections'. The second is names given on the basis of formal features, for example 'seven-', 'five-' or 'three-doored room'; *orossi* room (a room with large windows); *talar* (portal). The third type of name is based on the position of the rooms with within the house, for example: *zirzamin* (cellar), *zaviya* (corner), *tanabi* (attached room). For the terminology of Iranian architecture see Sa'id Fallahfar, *Farhang-i Vajiha-ye Mi'mari Sonnati Iran* (Tehran: Sa'id Fallahfar, 1378 [1999]).

[20] Although the concept is most clearly realised in large, expensive complexes, this notion of time/space is common even in ordinary buildings.

[21] The terms 'nomadic' and 'civil' are emphatically not used to demarcate a socio-cultural hierarchy, one term denoting a preliminary stage of the other, but as patterns of constructing the notion of space and dwelling.

[22] Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT. Press, 2007), p. 221.

[23] Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 103.

[24] See Penelope Hobhouse, *Gardens of Persia* (London: Cassell, 2006), pp. 8–12.

[25] See for example Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture*, second ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

[26] René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, fourth rev. ed., trans. Angus Macnab (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004).

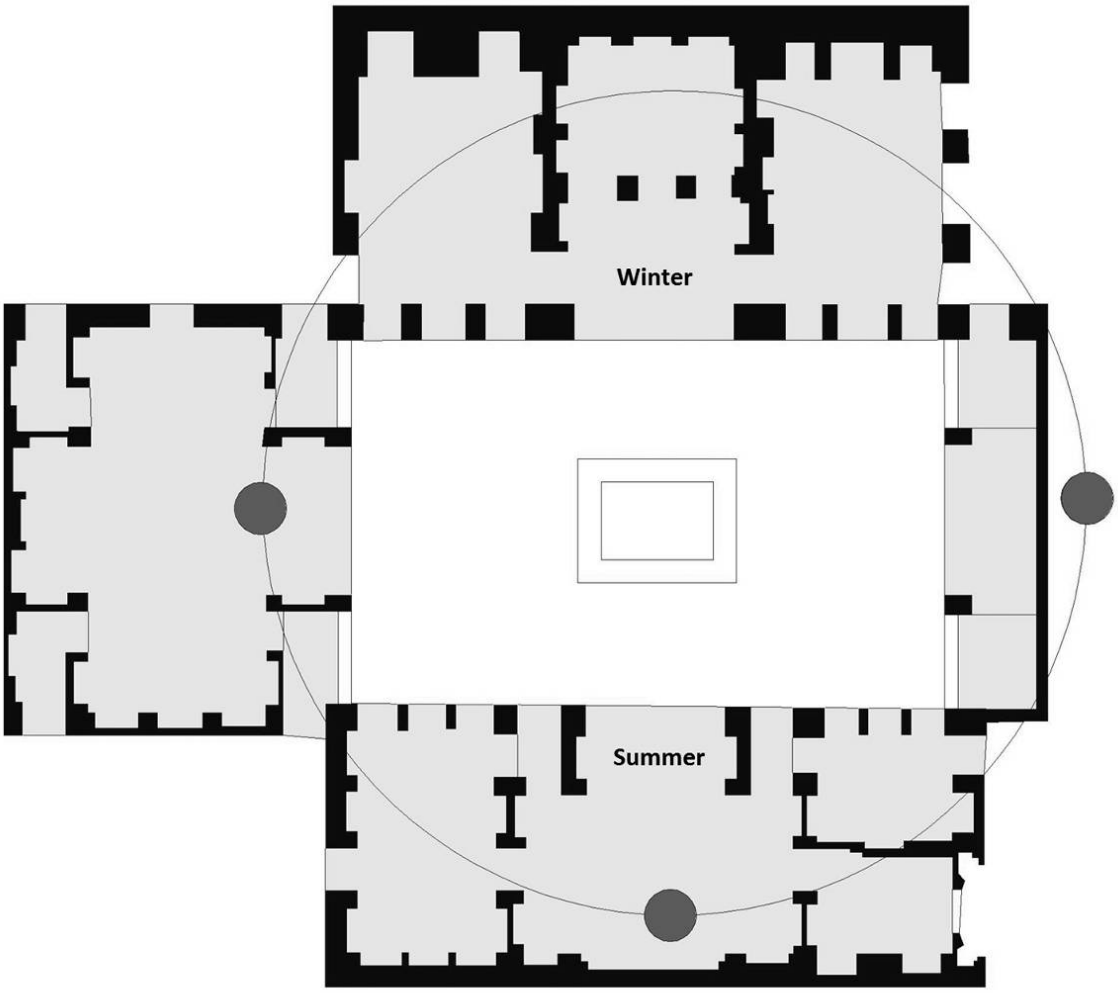

Figure 2. Schematic plan of an Iranian house showing the daily movement of the sun.

a broader cosmological view of the cross with the body as its referential ground, do not in any way particularise the relationship of this four-square image to the spatial language of architecture in the Islamic context.

The garden is at the very centre of Islamic aesthetics, a ‘liquid image’ if we can name it as such,[27] which moves from the well-worn theme of ‘paradise as a garden’, with its otherworldly connotations, to that of the simple place of pleasure, especially significant for a culture born of arid climates. In poetic terms, from the face of the beloved which ‘resembles a garden’, to the background settings of paintings where celestial or worldly lovers meet, the garden is frequently the place of spiritual union. Rumi narrates the story of an ant walking on the page of a book and imagining itself in a rose garden, the written words being the flowers of this garden,[28] and in a related vein the ‘Rose Garden’ (*Gulistan*) is a popular name for books in Persian literature.[29] Thus the garden must be understood as a dominant cultural theme, rather than just an image.

As places, gardens are the heterotopias of Islamic culture, ‘paradise on earth’ (*firdaws bar ru-yi zamin*),[30] representing a domain that lies outwith worldly limitations. It is the very place in which the notion of time as decay and change is challenged. While the traditional four-*iwan* architecture discussed above reflects the supremacy of time in a human life, which forces one to follow its moves and changes, the notion of the garden can be argued to work as the antithesis of such changes, as represented mainly by the image of time. In fact, within the quadripartite tradition of spatial division it is only in the garden and the cemetery-

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[27] I borrow this expression from Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) and *idem*, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

[28] Cited in Annemarie Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), p. 122.

[29] Most famously, ‘The Rose Garden’ (*Gulistan*) of Sa‘di, composed in the thirteenth century.

[30] In the cemetery of the Taj Mahal the following lines are written:

اگر فردوس بر روی زمین است
همین است و همین است و همین است

If there be paradise on earth,
It is this and it is this and it is this!

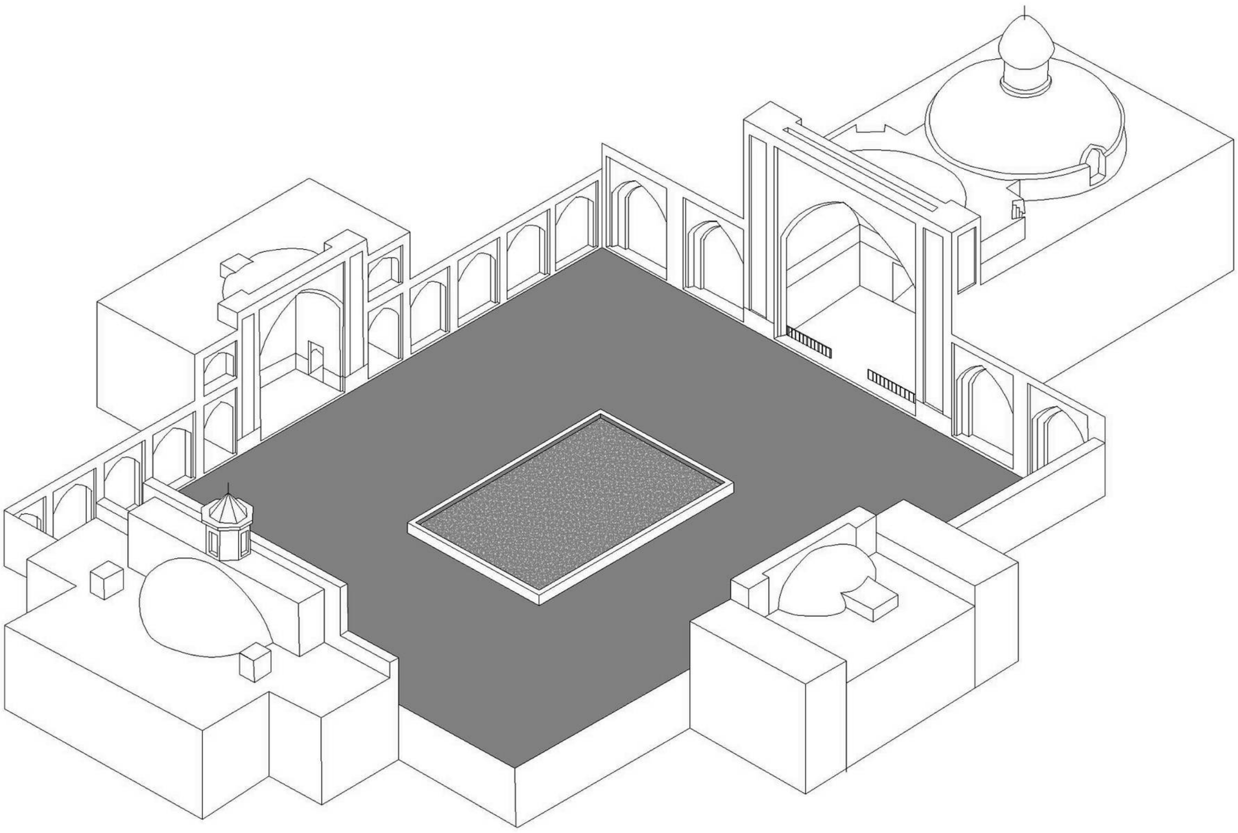

Figure 3. The typical outline of grand Qajar mosques: Jami' Burujird, Cultural Heritage of Khurramabad (Luristan).

garden – both atemporal places, the latter with the concept of death as a departure from the temporal at its heart, and the former a negation of the changeability of normal life – that the human being is positioned at the centre of an open space. In an analogy with residential architecture, the garden, as exemplified in the *chahar-bagh*, also represents the quadripartite outline discussed above in relation to the four-*iwan* house, but in a different arrangement. If the geography of the cosmos is symbolised in daily architecture through a 'whirling wheel' of movement within the four-square plan, the geography of paradise on earth is visualised with a man at the centre of this wheel, as signified by the central pavilion, open to the garden on four sides, that is a common presence in the *chahar-bagh* (fig. 4). Gardens represent a wheel in which the human is the pole, the *axis mundi* or the 'centre of the universe' in Mircea Eliade's terminology; however, this universe is visualised not as a mytho-geographic structure, but as a whirling wheel of time.[31] Thus the terms *chahar-bahar* ('four-spring'; hence *Chabahar*, the name of a city in southeast of Iran) and 'evergreen' (*hamisha bahar*, a flower) are, in the emphasis they place on permanent renewal without decay, the antithesis of the destructive changes and the anxiety wrought by the unpredictability and impermanence of nature. While in four-*iwan* architecture, man is situated on the border facing toward the centre, in the garden kiosk, man is situated at the centre of a cycle. He is at the same time within the changing circle and beyond change; thus within this metaphor man reaches eternity through his release from the cycle of time.

In addition to architecture, many other Islamic cultural materials share this image of cyclical time. The image can be compared to the throwing of a boomerang, which after a cyclic turn would come back to the same place. The mystical implications of this 'eternal return' are evident in various forms of literature, as John Renard observes:

> Recent studies have suggested that the tripartite structure of the classical Arabic ode reflects the three phases of the rite of passage, namely, separation, liminality, and transformation, and [the fourth phase] return to community. As adapted by mystics, the principal theme became some variation on the relationship of seeker to sought (God).[32]

This mystic strain traditionally represented the paths of spiritual odysseys through stories of journeys.[33] Traces of the same notion can also be seen in the music and dance

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[31] For the symbolic concept of the centre see Mircea Eliade, 'Symbolism of the Center' in *Images and Symbols* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 27–51.

[32] John Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), p. 119.

[33] This is the theme upon which Mulla Sadra (d. 1050 H/1641 CE) based his magnum opus *al-Asfar al-Arba'a* ('The Four Journeys').

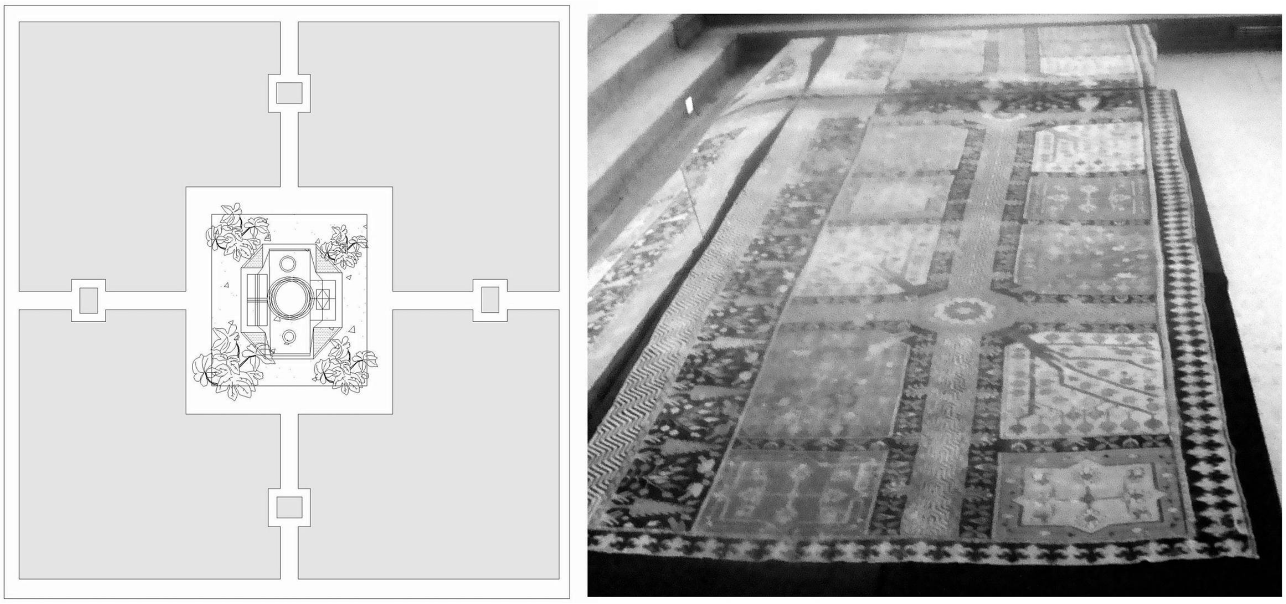

Figure 4. The quadripartite plan of the chahar-bagh*, and a seventeenth-century 'garden carpet'.*

associated with Sufi practice (*sama'*). The *charkh-i gardun* or 'whirling wheel' has a central position in symbolism and cosmology of *sama'* (whirling dances) and in Sufi music. Ahmad Tusi, a Sufi writer of the seventh century of the Hijra, describes the *daf* ('tambourine', also called *dayira* ['circle'] in Persian) as follows:

> [t]he movements inside human beings have two causes; it is either from the inside or the outside. If it is inside, it is called rapture, and if it is outside, it is called *daf* ('tambourine'), *nay* ('pipe') and *ghina* ('music'). *Daf* indicates the circle of the cosmos, and the covered skin indicates the Being, and the strokes on the *daf* indicate the mercies and divine blessings coming from the 'Inner In' (*Batin al-Butun*) revealed to the Being.[34]

The idea of the cosmic circle and the centre is comparable to the whirling dances of the Mevlana dervishes who whirl in a circle around their *pir* ('elder' or master). Rumi himself described *sama'* as follows:

> The wise man has told these songs;
> They are adopted from the whirling of the wheel.
> This is the sound of the turnings of the wheel,
> Which people sing in their throat and tambour.[35]

All of these cultural phenomena share a concept of the voyage, in which time works as a category of measurement, on a whirling or circular theme. It is this idea of cyclical time that constructs an overarching theme within Islamic, particularly Iranian, culture: a cyclical image that is expressed through the different media outlined above.

Any symbolic interpretation necessarily brings up the question of the validity of hermeneutics. Within the area of Islamic studies, the lack of direct iconographic references means that this issue has become the central challenge for those seeking to define the semantics of Islamic art.[36] Two groups, the symbolists and the formalists, each face difficulties in contextualising their ideas. The former, working from esoteric ideas of Islamic mysticism, introduce symbolic systems that require extensive and rarefied knowledge in order to discover supposed hidden meanings. They fail to explain the common grounds of understanding found in traditional art, and especially in the architecture of the public sphere. The formalists, on the other hand, also face problems in their reduction of the function of art to a beautifying phenomenon – mere ornament – lacking any connection with the intellectual domain of culture.[37]

The interpretation introduced in this article is based on a cultural theme that is founded on popular literature and often intangible beliefs. A cultural theme of this type functions analogically like a Kantian category, considered to be the necessary condition for any possible experience, although the subject of discussion here is of course an observable cultural theme, and not a universal *a priori* category. The cultural specificity of a supposedly universal notion like time, theoretically reducible to the scale of individuals, is the very point that helps us reject abstract generalisations. It is only through this type of thematic analysis within cultures that we may safely bridge the gap between universals and specifics. On the one hand, it gives to specific cultures the power of abstraction and the capacity to transcend the close space of ethnicity and locality. On the other hand, it enables the formation of a space between the local and the universal, which should neither be dismissed nor represented as unsurpassable. Of course, it follows that the generalisations presented in this paper are questionable from the same logical position. There are always going to be enough exceptions to any generalised observations to make the conclusions presented here conditional perspectives at best, but this study stands as a starting point for research on comparative conceptions of time and their physical expressions within Islamic material culture.

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[34] Ahmad Tusi, *Bavariq al-Alma'fi al-radd-i 'ala man Yahram al-sama'a bi'l-Ijma'*, ed. A. Mojahid (Tehran: Surush, 1333 [1954]), p. 32.

[35] Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Kulliyat-i Masnavi-yi Ma'navi,* ed. Badi' al-Zaman Furuzanfar and M. Darvish (Tehran: Javidan, 1342 [1963]), book 4, p. 37.

[36] Oleg Grabar, 'Symbols and signs in Islamic architecture', in J. Katz (ed.), *Architecture as Symbol and Self-Identity* (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1979), pp. 1–11.

[37] As an example of the symbolic strain see Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005). Formalism is the mutual outcome of those views which see Islamic art formally, as an isolated phenomenon: see Terry Allen, 'Horizons in Islamic Art', in *idem*, *Five essays on Islamic Art* (Sebastopol, CA: Solipsist Press, 1988), pp. 39–63.

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THE PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL DAMASCUS: 'WHERE OLD AND NEW MEET'

Rema Haddad

Damascus, the capital of Syria, is one of the most important cities in the Arab world. The historic core of Damascus is highly significant because of its urban longevity – Damascus started its existence in the second millennium BCE[1] – and it is the site of one of the oldest historic cores in the world that still serves as a residential area. The diversity of urban forms in Damascus has resulted from many processes, both social and environmental, as well as a series of approaches to urban development – the latter having been largely promoted by the state in recent decades, using master planning as a key approach in addition to other interventions.

Between 1930 and 1970 Damascus was subject to a series of modernising master plans which adopted functional planning and called for improvements in accessibility and the scope for appreciation of the city's monuments. These plans were prepared by teams composed of both foreign and local experts and were supported by the state. Owing to conservationist objections, as well as other factors, these master plans for Damascus were only partly implemented. Their implementation was limited to demolishing parts of the historic fabric in order to create public squares or spaces, and/or to provide room for roads and parking areas, with a parallel focus on the upgrading of individual buildings and monuments.

The spaces in question have not been transformed adequately following the incomplete implementation of the master plans. They have become open wounds in the historic fabric of the city and are deteriorating, dominated by car traffic or used as parking lots. As a result the public realm has been transformed from a social place with rich and lively public spaces into an area supporting vehicle movement and storage, but lacking in meaningful public life. The condition of these spaces highlights how difficult it is to decide what is compatible with the pre-existing environment: high buildings or low buildings? Should structures be inward-looking like courtyard buildings, or should they face outwards? In other words, these spaces present an extreme case of the clash between modernity and tradition, between new and old.[2]

The overall aim of my research is the achievement of a clearer understanding of the potential for improvement in public spaces within the historic city centre of Damascus. The project as a whole takes a comprehensive qualitative approach, focusing on public space as a 'product' which is the result of a process. In terms of the product, the nature of public spaces within central Damascus – both morphological and functional aspects – was examined using direct observation. The governance process was analysed at local level to define the main actors,[3] the rules that they interact with, and the rationales they use and had used to intervene in public spaces. This analysis included locality-specific literature reviews, and interviews with key informants.[4]

This paper presents some aspects of the research carried out during the course of my doctoral thesis. It will focus on the historical development of public spaces in Damascus, including the current state of public spaces in the city's historic centre, in order to address the following questions: What has been the historical development of public space in Damascus? How and why did public spaces develop this way? How has the meeting between old and new been resolved in the contemporary public spaces of Damascus? The study will present an analysis of the evolution of the public realm and public space in the city, using data which was collected from repeated observation of these spaces. These observations were made directly in the selected spaces during fieldtrips conducted in 2006, 2007 and 2009, and indirectly through the reconstruction of historic situations and the study of the key events that transformed the spaces. Reconstruction was undertaken using evidence from historic documents and maps. Other sources of data included grey literature,[5] and a number of informal as well as semi-structured interviews with academics and official authorities.

The Historical Development of Public Space in Damascus

Public spaces and the public realm have evolved and changed throughout history. Diverse political and socioeconomic circumstances have left their marks on Damascus over time, resulting in a particular kind of urban form and creating a public realm with distinct features that have characterised the public spaces of each historical period. Naturally, the public spaces of Damascus have undergone many changes throughout history. New forms of public space have been created at each stage, through demolition, modification, reuse or reshaping to accommodate new needs and interests, as well as through the expansion of the city into new areas. For the purposes of this study four general periods have been set out, delineated by the shifting influences of cultural exchange, technology, and changing political and economic systems.

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[1] Spiro Kostof, *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), p. 250.

[2] By modernity and modernisation, I refer in this context to the introduction of new ways of thinking, tools and commodities which were at that point new to local people, and which affected different aspects of public space and public life in ways that will be explored below.

[3] In this context, 'actors' include political figures and decision-makers, governmental officials, NGOs, academics, residents, and so forth.

[4] Rema Haddad, *Changes in the Nature and Governance of Public Spaces in the Historic City Centre: The Case of Damascus* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Heriot Watt University, 2009).

[5] 'Grey literature' includes documents and reports gathered from key informants and governmental departments during field trips.

The first period in this history extends up to the seventh century CE: this covers the earliest history of Damascus up to the beginning of Islamic rule, which was to have a great impact on the city in the following period. The second period extends from the beginning of Islamic rule, in the seventh century, to the eighteenth century: this phase is characterised by the prevailing organic city-form and the application of local regulations and rules. The third period runs from the nineteenth century up to independence (1946), a historical period that was marked by the dominance of European forces and the first impacts of modernity on Damascus. Finally, the fourth period covers post-independence up to the present day, a period that has seen Syria gain its political independence, bringing various changes to its public space and public realm.

Up to the Seventh Century

Damascus became the capital of the Aramaic kingdom in the tenth century BCE, and was to continue as a major or capital city from that time onwards, for various different civilisations and kingdoms. The area was ruled successively by the Assyrians, Chaldeans and then Persians. After Persian rule ended with the city falling to Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, there began a series of interventions from the West – Greek, Roman, and Byzantine rule – that lasted nearly a thousand years. Roman Damascus is the oldest incarnation of the city for which architectural elements survive in situ, making it possible to form a relatively precise picture of the city under Roman rule. At that time the city took a rectangular shape measuring 1500 by 900 metres, with straight sides except to the north, which was bounded by a secondary branch of the Barada River. The theatre and the agora were open spaces used for participatory sport and cultural activities. The agora was a mirror that reflected the social life of the city: it was a place in which economic, political and cultural activities were performed alongside each other.[6]

During the Byzantine period, the Graeco–Roman urban structure began to disintegrate. Straight Street, the Roman street running from east to west in the old city, was slowly invaded by kiosks. The original rectangular shape of the city, with its terraced houses, gridded blocks and wide arcaded streets, was gradually transformed into an irregular fabric of dwellings, alleyways and cul-de-sacs (fig. 1). The process of transformation from regular to irregular layout manifests the means by which public space was susceptible to encroachment. This was related to the weakness of governmental monitoring, as well as to a variety of cultural practices,[7] such as the invasion of the street space by temporary kiosks built by merchants, which eventually became permanent.[8] Other cultural practices affecting the appearance and use of street space include social conventions concerning the position of women and family life in society.[9]

From the Seventh Century to the Eighteenth Century

The second period in this history of the city began when Muslim armies took possession of Damascus in 635 CE and the city became the capital of the Umayyad state (661–750). Damascus suffered from war and destruction during the periods of ʻAbbasid (750–968) and Fatimid rule (968–1075). However, the city enjoyed relative security and safety during the Ayyubid period (1174–1259) and new suburbs appeared outside the city walls. Although Cairo was the capital of the Mamluk state (1250–1517), Damascus kept its glory during this period and became one of the biggest and most important cities of the Mamluk Empire. In 1516, Damascus became the largest Syrian province (*wilaya*) of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman domination of the city was to last for four centuries (1516–1918).

Public space and the public realm evolved in various ways during the different stages of the city's history in the Islamic period. The organic urban form that had begun to develop during the Byzantine era became the dominant morphology up to the eighteenth century, with its distinct urban institutions repeated many times over: a small mosque or church, public bath, café, bakery and market. This organic urban form of the old city was mostly contained within the city wall, with some suburbs forming in the western, northern and southern areas outside the city walls (up to the thirteenth century; fig. 2). These suburbs grew bigger and eventually connected with each other to form the fabric surrounding the old city, except on the eastern side where the *ghuta* (agricultural land surrounding the city) was located (fig. 3).

Thus, the urban forms of Damascus to the beginning of the eighteenth century developed in response to social and environmental factors and reflected the weak influence of building legislation and planning regulations, but also responded to strong and deeply embedded forms of

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[6] Ali Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 76.

[7] Jean Sauvaget, 'Le plan antique de Damas', *Syria*, 26 (1949), pp. 314–358; quoted in Nezar al-Sayyad (ed.), *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p. 30.

[8] Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

[9] See Howard Davis, *The Culture of Building* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2006).

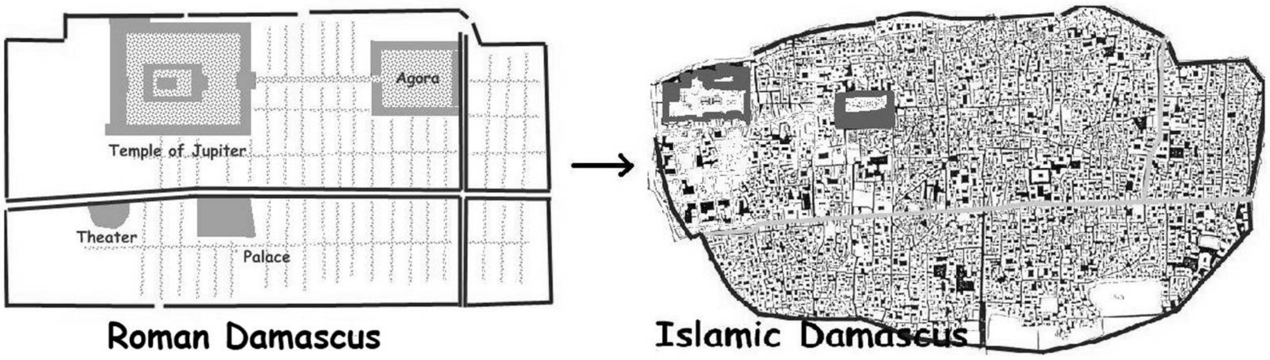
Agora
Temple of Jupiter
Theater
Palace
Roman Damascus
Islamic Damascus

Figure 1. The historic city of Damascus, showing the organic growth of streets and cul-de-sacs which gradually modified the pre-existing gridiron plan of Roman Damascus. All images by the author unless otherwise stated.

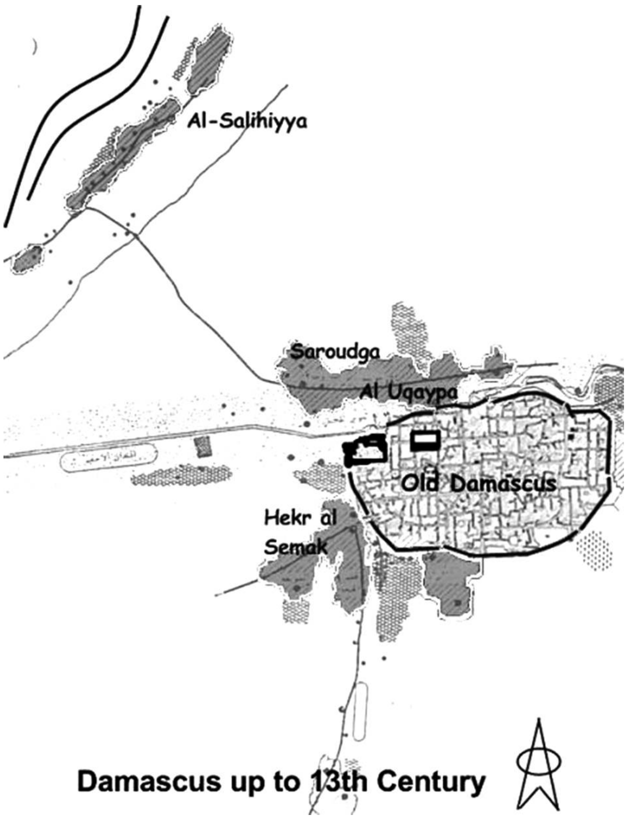
Al-Salihiyya
Saroudga
Al Uqaypa
Old Damascus
Hekr al Semak
Damascus up to 13th Century

Figure 2. Damascus up to the thirteenth century, contained mainly within the city wall with some suburbs located towards to the north, west and south.

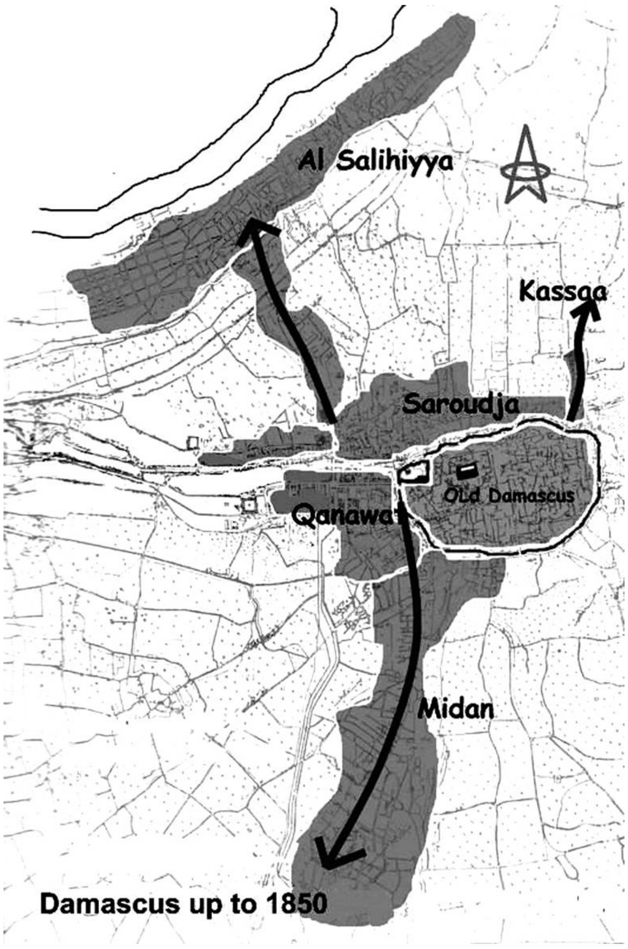
Al Salihiyya
Kassaa
Saroudja
Qanawat
Old Damascus
Midan
Damascus up to 1850

Figure 3. Damascus up to 1850: the city expands further outside the city wall towards the north, west and south, with the same traditional layout.

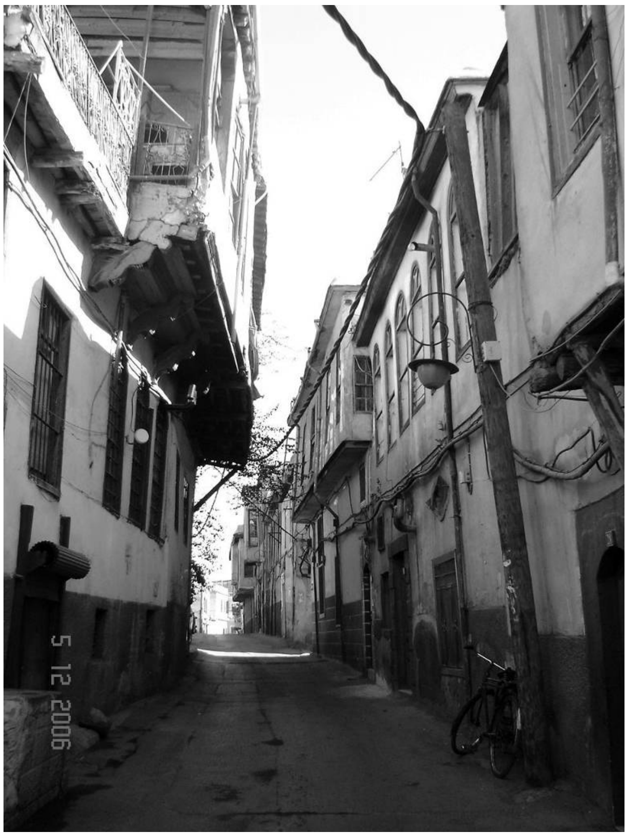

Figure 4. Narrow lane within the historic fabric of Damascus.

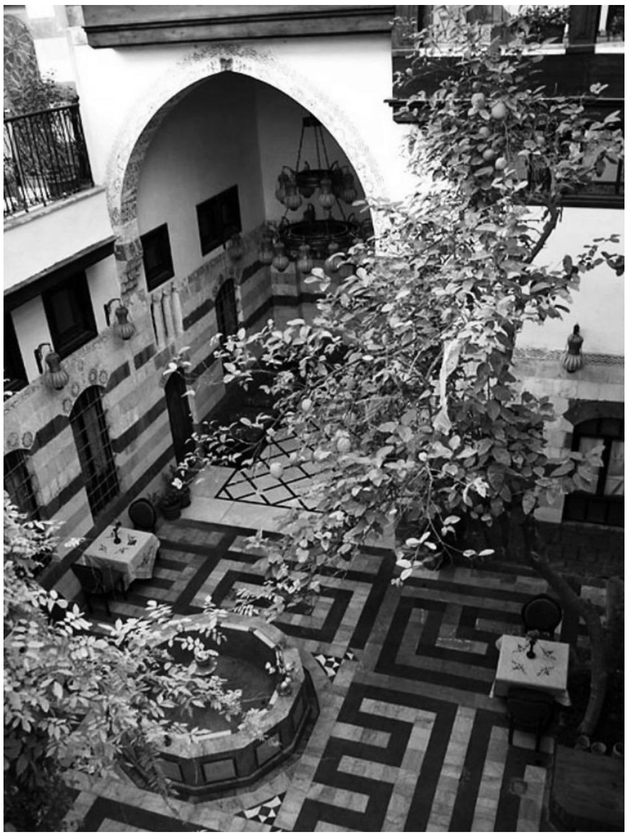

Figure 5. Courtyard of a traditional house within the historic fabric. Image source: www.trekearth.com/gallery/Middle_East/Syria/South/Dimashq/damascus/page1.htm.

social control. The 'traditional' form of the city was and is characterised by clustered courtyard buildings expanding horizontally along narrow lanes. The height of buildings of the traditional form is normally modest: on average these have two floors (figs 4 and 5). Within the traditional urban form of Damascus the main circulation axes were occupied by commercial premises and essential services, and public and private realms were distinctly separate in both work and residential spaces. A hierarchy of space existed, from public through semi-public and semi-private to private spaces.

The main areas of public activity in the old city were located around its geographical centre. The citadel, Great Mosque, church and main markets – as the respective centres of political, spiritual and economic activity and power – constituted focal points at the city level. At the neighbourhood level, public baths, cafés and local markets were indoor spaces that fulfilled very important functions for social activity in old Damascus.[10] The small size of the population of the historic core, and their strong social bonds with each other, reduced the 'publicness' of spaces inside the urban quarters.[11]

The sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries were marked by the slow disappearance of Damascus from the world stage.[12] Simultaneously, the city experienced significant weakness within its central administration.[13] However, the arrival of Napoleon's Expedition to Egypt in 1798 affected the entire Levant region, and Damascus subsequently underwent the transition from an Islamic political economy to one dominated by European powers.

From the Nineteenth Century to Independence

The impact of European influences and modernity itself were two characteristics of this period. Between 1840 and the First World War, Damascus received the first impact of modernity as filtered through the strategies and visions which coloured the mentality of the later Ottoman governors who ruled Syria from the beginning of the nineteenth century.[14] Modernisation took place in administrative life as well as in infrastructure (through for example electrification,

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[10] Salwa Mikhael, *Traditional Elements in Residential Architecture in the Context of Changing Islamic Society: A Comparative Study of Damascus and Delhi* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, 1998).

[11] Leila Hudson, 'Late Ottoman Damascus: Investments in Public Space and the Emergence of Popular Sovereignty', *Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 15/2 (2006), pp. 151–169.

[12] Abdul Qader al-Rihawi, *Damascus: Its History, Development and Artistic Heritage* (Damascus: Dar al-Bashar, 1970), p. 32.

[13] Dorothee Sack, 'The Historic Fabric of Damascus and its Changes in the 19th and at the Beginning of the 20th Century', in Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schäbler (eds), *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation in Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), pp. 185–202.

[14] Leila Hudson, *Transforming Damascus: Space and Modernity in an Islamic City* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008), pp. 15–31.

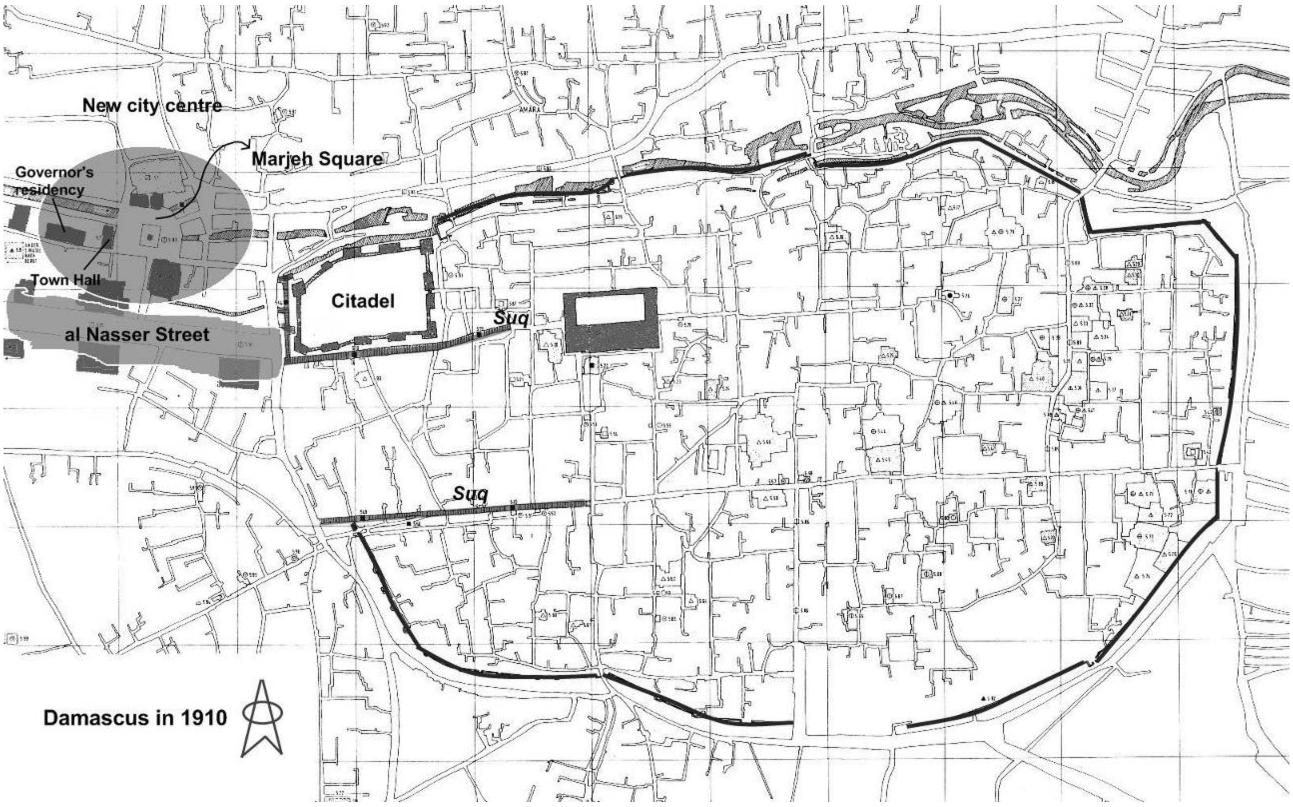

Figure 6. Damascus in 1910.

which first came to Damascus in 1907),[15] public transport and communication. In this period, the city, public spaces and the public realm were transformed significantly: most obviously, new public spaces, such as squares, avenues and parks, could be noted within the layout of the city.

Marjeh Square represented a distinct and new type of public space: this was the site of the palace of the governor Ibrahim Basha (active in Syria 1831–1840), thus transferring political power from the Islamic citadel to the square.[16] This space was totally new for Damascus in terms of its morphological and functional aspects. The new square formed the new city centre, and it symbolised transitions taking place in the social, legal and topographical arenas. It also introduced a new public area to the city; within the legal sphere it signified the transition from the law of Islam to the law of the secular state; and it marked the beginning of an era when building and planning regulations were controlled by a more centralised system, quite different from that which had given rise to the older organic form of the city, when regulations were applied only at the very local level. This new space, Marjeh Square, was to centralise future developments in the city (figs 6 and 7).

Meanwhile, the marketplace as a public space experienced no new developments in terms of morphological and functional aspects, but was witness to the use of various new materials such as sheet metal, reflecting the processes of modernity through industrialisation. New cafés appeared, clustered within the new city centre. The café, which had previously been located in traditional houses with windows onto alleyways, took on the new form of free-standing pavilions with vast glass façades typically located within a public garden or the new city centre. Another major change to public space during this period was the appearance of the public park along Beirut Street which runs alongside the Barada River.[17] Cafés also took advantage of the pleasant environment of the Barada River space and began to appear in the area. An important café was located near one of the seven historic gates to the old city, Bab al–Salam, where three branches of the river met.[18]

Within these new public spaces, modes of movement and social interaction experienced a shift. Public spaces in the old organic form had accommodated pedestrian and animal circulation. With the changes in public landscape, and the modernisation of the city's transportation infrastructure, new spaces witnessed new types of circulation: trams, automobiles and buses. The coexistence of movement and social space was still to be seen, however, within the new spaces. One example was al-Nasser Street, which was characterised by a pedestrian space in its middle, containing a rich green public garden for people to use for relaxing and socialising.

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[15] Al-Rihawi, *Damascus*, p. 71.

[16] Gérard Degeorge, *Damascus* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), p. 230.

[17] Hudson, 'Late Ottoman Damascus', p. 162.

[18] Degeorge, *Damascus*, p. 230.

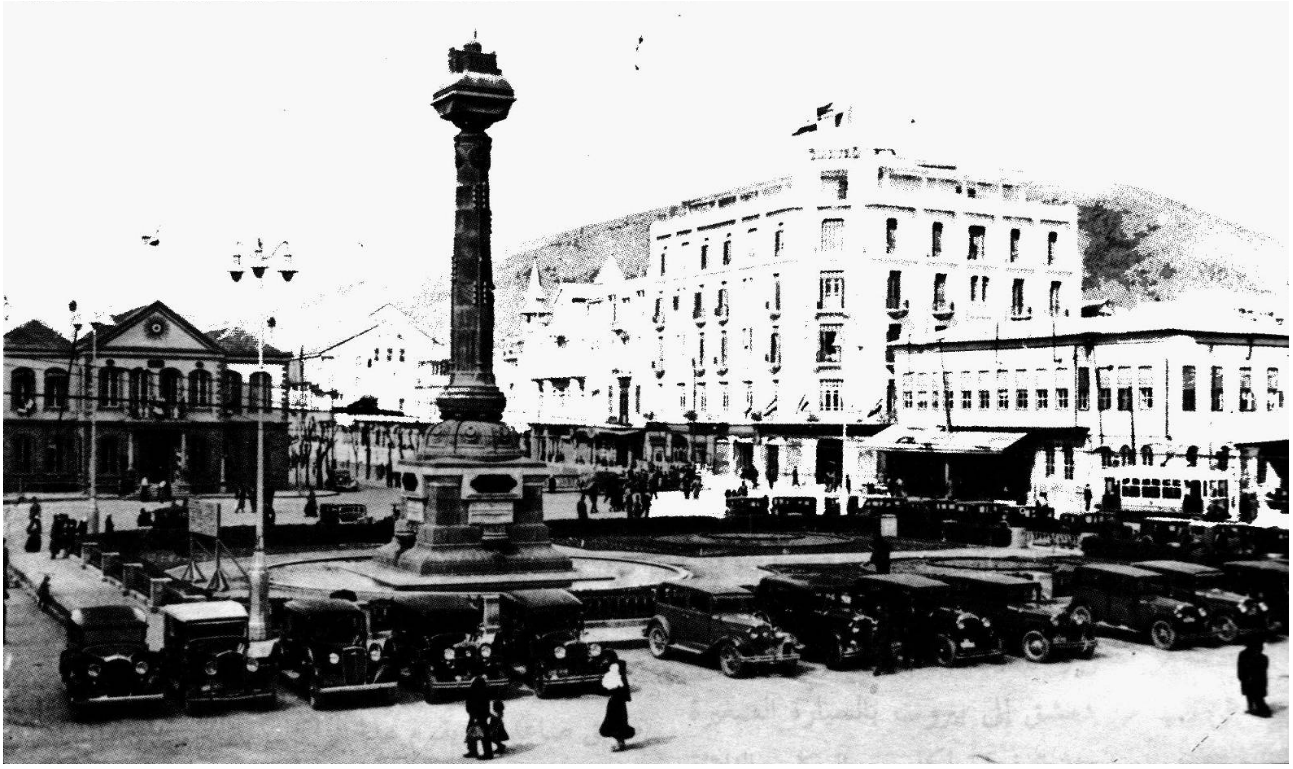

Figure 7. Marjeh Square in the 1930s. Image source: http://www.oldamascus.com.

The social activities that were practised within the old organic form of the city also underwent changes. By the beginning of the twentieth century, new forms of public building and new types of public gathering had emerged. Cinemas, theatres and public gardens improved the new city centre and the expanded area to the west of the old city. People who used to go to the public baths and cafés within their district for socialising and entertainment found that new urban forms of entertainment, such as cinemas and theatres, provided a new type of social activity. In the 'traditional' public baths and cafés, socialising and other activities took place between people who were experiencing each other face to face; in the cinema and at the theatre, where technology had a profound impact, interaction took place mainly between audience and the screen or the stage of the theatre.

The 'traditional' family which used to socialise, relax, and gather in the courtyard – a private space – found a new open space where they could enjoy being in the natural environment: the public garden. Sofanieh Garden was located near the Bab Tuma district, and four other public gardens were erected between 1900 and 1920 on the north bank of the Barada. 'Broad, sunny boulevards and parks lent themselves to promenades, with husband and wife often walking together'.[19] Thus, some social activities changed location, shifting from private to public spaces, and the social activities of a family, which in the past had taken place in the courtyard, could now be seen in open public spaces.

New changes in the public realm occurred during the period of French rule (1920–1946). By the 1920s, the European approach to public spaces had become increasingly dominant in Damascus. This is revealed in the expansion that took place towards the northern and western areas of the old city: public buildings became concentrated along wide, straight streets which met to form squares. New centres continued to evolve, with new concentrations of cultural use taking place, such as newspaper offices, bookstores, hotels, new cinemas and high-class cafés (see fig. 8).[20] Building typologies also changed, with new forms appearing. These included tenement buildings of three or four floors, with commercial activities taking place on the ground floor; detached buildings such as villas; taller buildings of five or more floors; and some governmental buildings (universities, hospitals and so forth; see fig. 9). These changes – introduced both to satisfy the military needs of the colonisers and to improve the living conditions of the colonised population – gave birth to a European-style city.

On 18th October 1925 the western district of old Damascus within the city wall was bombed during the Syrian anti-French Revolt. During 1936 the district was rebuilt and a gridiron pattern of wide straight roads, with a large open

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[19] Elizabeth F. Thompson, 'Sex and Cinema in Damascus', in Hans Chr. Korsholm Neilsen and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (eds), *Middle Eastern Cities 1900–1950: Public Spaces and Public Spheres* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2001), p. 96.

[20] Thompson, 'Sex and Cinema', p. 97.

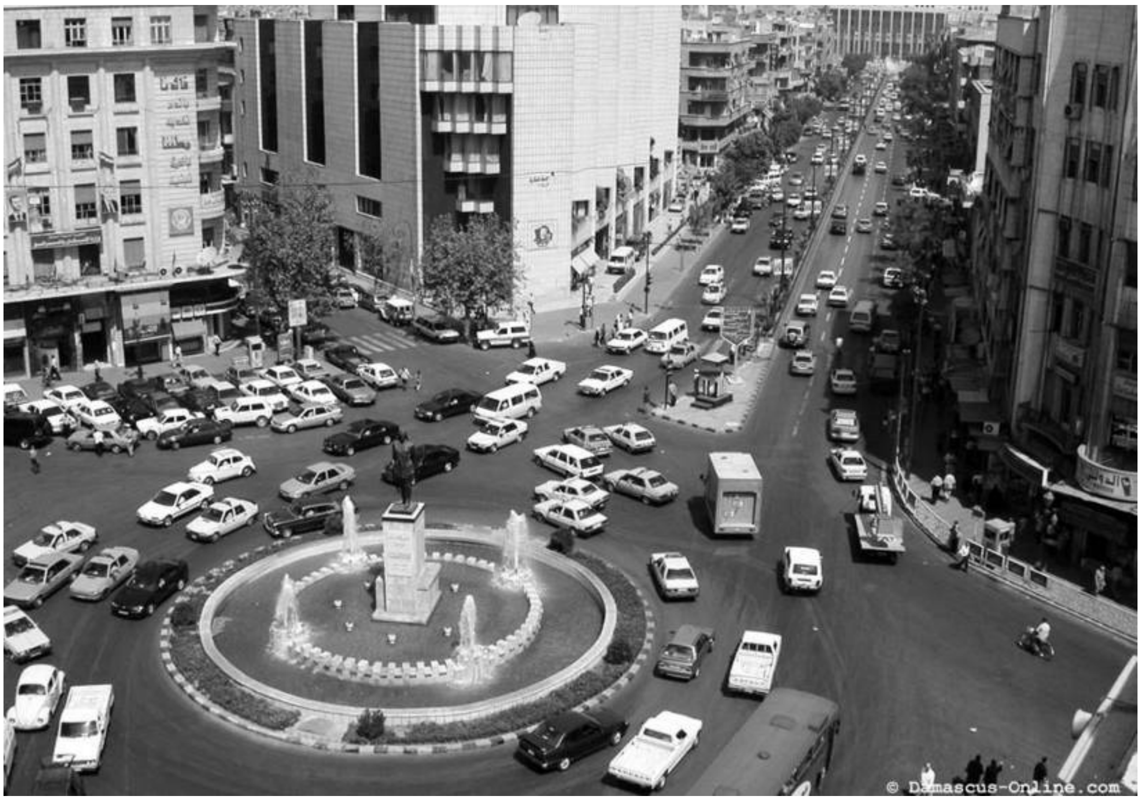

Figure 8. Wide streets meeting in focal points, a concept envisaged by the French. Image source: http://www.damascus-online.com/Photos/damascus.htm.

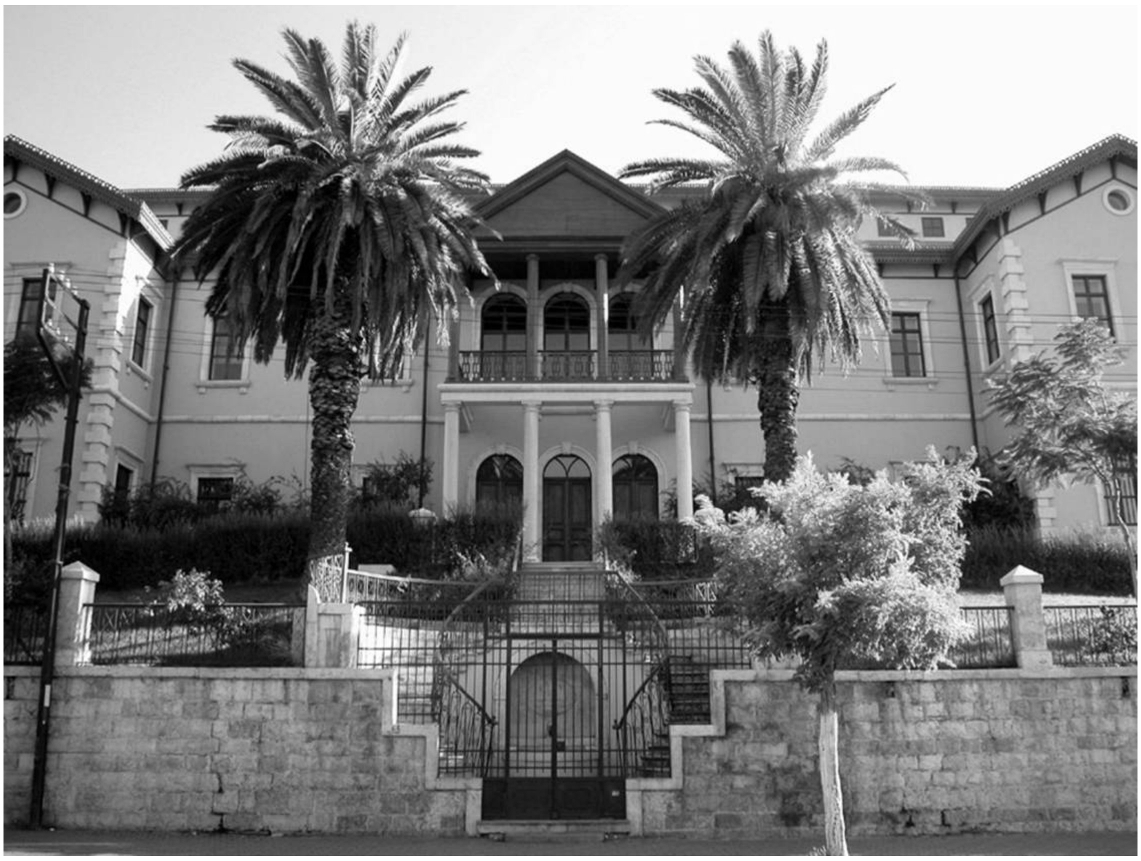

Figure 9. Al-Ghuraba Hospital (est. 1899), showing the influence of European styles. The building is now used by Damascus University as the Rida Said Conference Centre. Image source: http://www.damascus-online.com/Photos/damascus.htm.

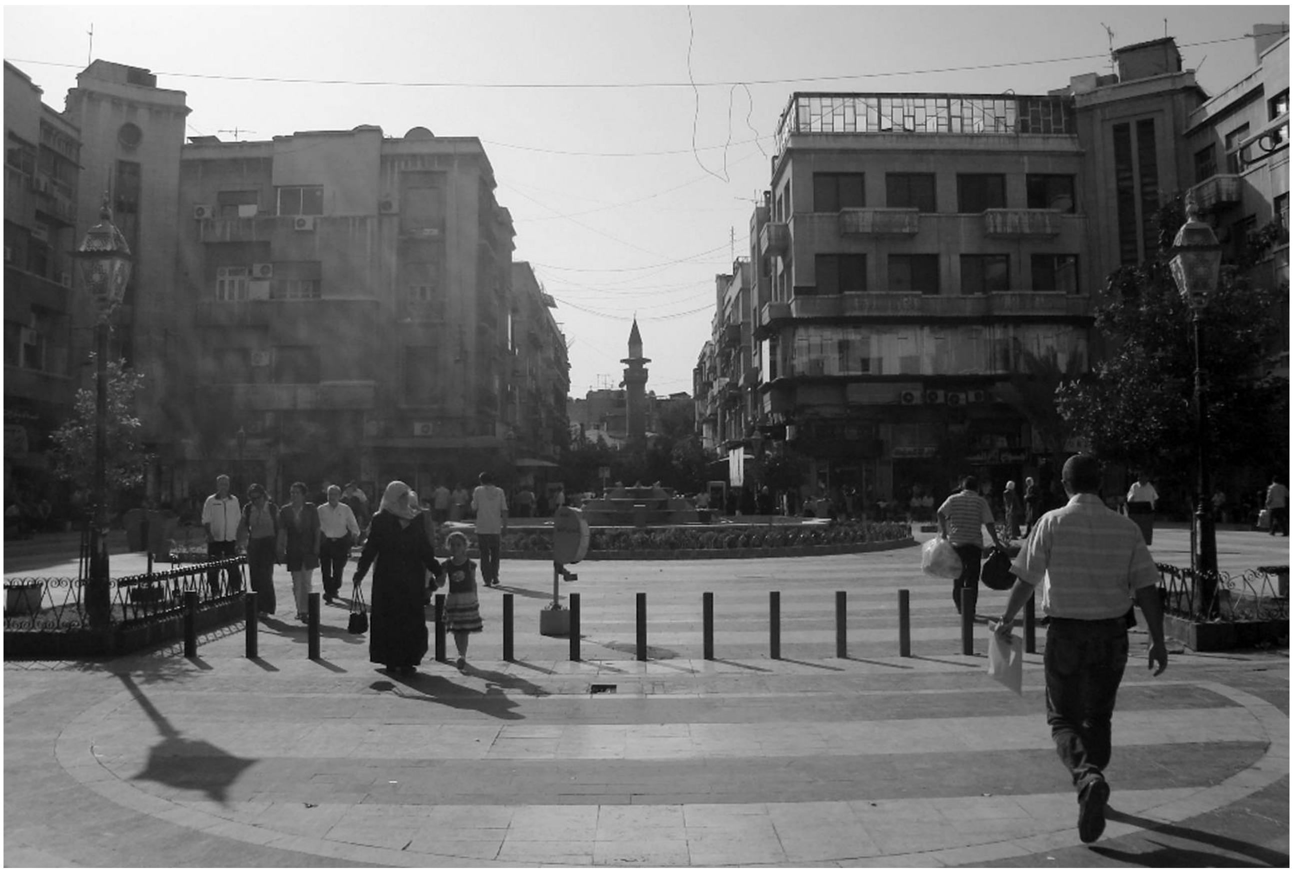

Figure 10. Al-Hariqa Square.

space known as al-Hariqa Square, was created where the destroyed area had been. This was the first intervention made through wholesale new development in the old historic fabric. Many private, semi-private and semi-public alleyways were destroyed, along with their private and parochial or communal realms,[21] and the rebuilt area of al-Hariqa, with its square, had very different morphological and functional characteristics from the earlier organic form of the area (fig. 10).

Al-Hariqa Square highlights the first effects of the modern movement in Damascus. It was built according to the first master plan prepared in 1936 by Michel Ecochard and the Frères Danger (fig. 11).[22] That plan proposed several things: safeguarding the *ghuta*; planning for urban growth; dealing in depth with interregional and urban traffic; and clearing areas around certain historic buildings, starting with the citadel and the tomb of Saladin near the Umayyad Mosque. The development of the al-Hariqa area was the beginning of the conversion of a large proportion of the old city's courtyards to commercial functions, in order to create the commercial centre of contemporary Damascus.

In brief, public space and the public realm experienced major changes during the period from 1800 to independence. The main characteristic of these changes was the increasingly 'public' nature of public spaces. These formed new centres that accommodated administrative, governmental and cultural buildings, and took the form of blocks and straight streets. The new blocks that were constructed during this period were characterised by the mix of Ottoman and European façades that enclosed these centres. In turn, social life also underwent new changes as a result of the move from private to public space within this new milieu.

Post-Independence to the Present Day

Syria became independent from France in April 1946. The country became a theatre for conflicts between different political parties, each with its own ideology, though some of them had common interests in controlling capitalist expansion and ensuring the development of the country following independence.[23] Looking back on the history of Damascus following Syrian independence, three periods of major change can be identified: these are the early years of independence, the Socialist period of the 1970s, and the transitional period of the 1990s.

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[21] Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), p. 17.

[22] Danger was one of the pillars of the French society of urban planners, the Société française des urbanistes (SFU) and the director of urban planning in Damascus during the period of the French Mandate (1920–1946).

[23] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 25–45.

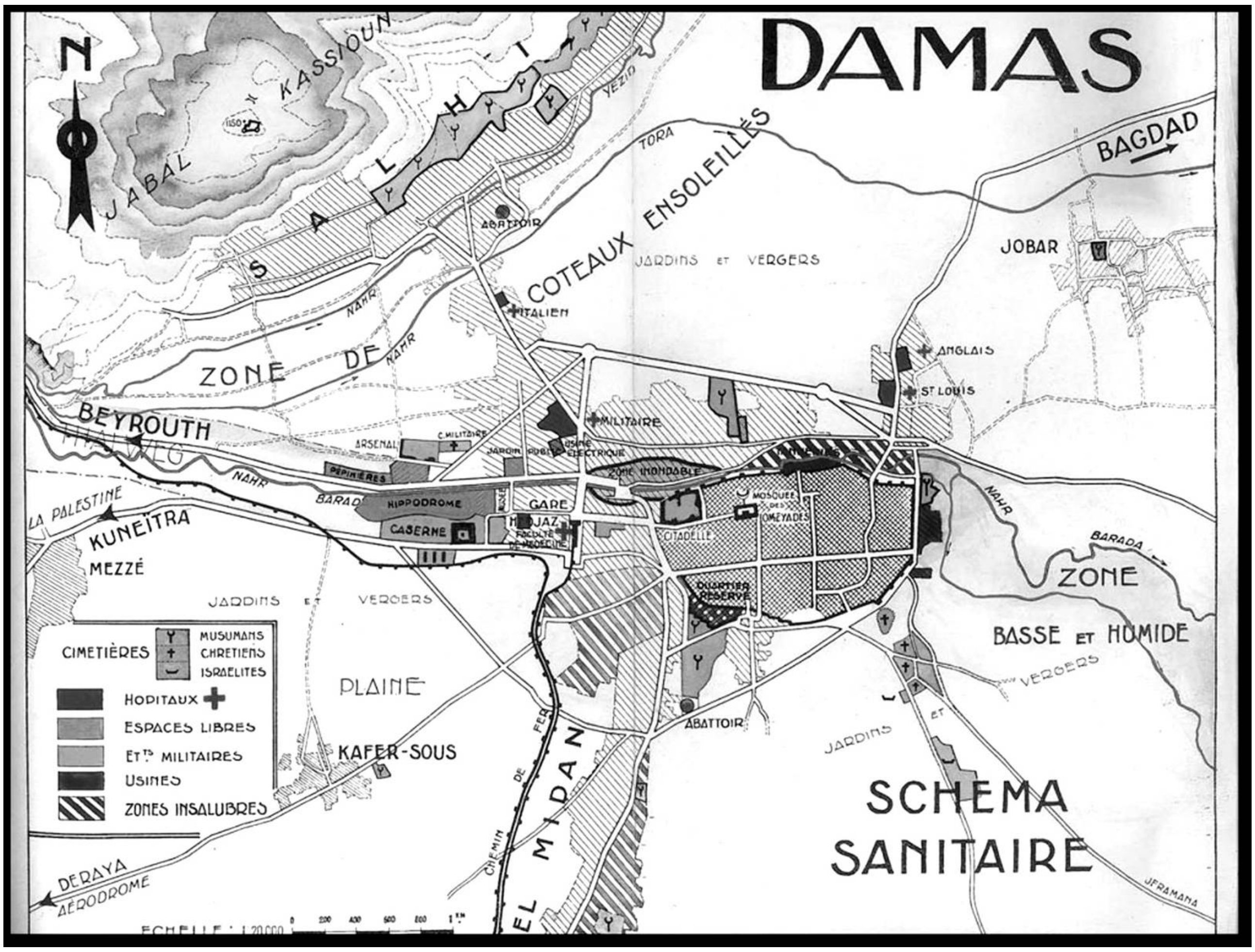
DAMAS
SCHEMA SANITAIRE
N
JABAL KASSIOUN
SALHIYE
COTEAUX ENSOLEILLÉS
ZONE DE
BAGDAD
JOBAR
JARDINS ET VERGERS
BEYROUTH
LA PALESTINE
KUNEITRA
MEZZÉ
HIPPODROME
CASERNE
GARE
HEDJAZ
CITADELLE
MOSQUÉE DES OMEYADES
ZONE BASSE ET HUMIDE
PLAINE
KAFER-SOUS
EL MIDAN
DERAYA
AÉRODROME
ABATTOIR
CIMETIÈRES
MUSULMANS
CHRETIENS
ISRAELITES
HOPITAUX
ESPACES LIBRES
ETTS MILITAIRES
USINES
ZONES INSALUBRES
ECHELLE : 1:20 000

Figure 11. Master plan for Damascus, showing main circulation networks. From the Danger & Ecochard plan of 1936; image source: http://360th.wordpress.com.

During the 1960s, in the early period of independence, an ideological conflict emerged over how to deal with old Damascus. As one (professional) interviewee put it, the government was split into two schools of thought with regard to the upgrading of the old city. While the conservatives favoured a classical way of thinking about the city based on the 'Islamic city model', the Ba'athists and Communists preferred a modern ideal, based on 'master plans' for development activities. In the event, the latter approach won out, and Damascus became a city where modern architectural theories would be applied.

Damascus was the subject of two master plans: the aforementioned 1936 master plan of Ecochard and Danger, and a second plan completed in 1968. The 1936 scheme was soon outdated, as population growth intensified during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, socioeconomic developments linked to rural and international migration put new pressures on the historic city. The authorities commissioned a Bulgarian expert, Morozov, to propose a new master plan in 1957. Morozov's plan placed an emphasis on the resolution of inner-city problems in a typical modernist manner: through large-scale clearances. But the plan was rejected because it raised very negative reactions from a consultant body of professionals, who pointed out that it contradicted the very nature of the historic fabric, where houses were inward-looking into interior courtyards and had traditionally turned their backs on the public domain of the street.[24]

The authorities called upon Ecochard and Gyoji Banshoya in 1964 to prepare a new master plan, which was finished in 1968. But this time, as one informant put it, 'a new Ecochard returned to Damascus with a broader conception of his field, that urbanism should be the basis of regional planning, especially in a developing country'. The plan aimed to control urban growth up to 1985 through three main principles: first, by giving priority to transport infrastructure; second, by safeguarding the *ghuta* through recommending urban expansion over the foothills of Mount Qasiyun towards the Berzeh sector in the east and the Mezzeh in the southwest; and third, by preserving and restoring historic buildings in the old quarters (figs 12 and 13).

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[24] Al-Rihawi, *Damascus*, p. 87.

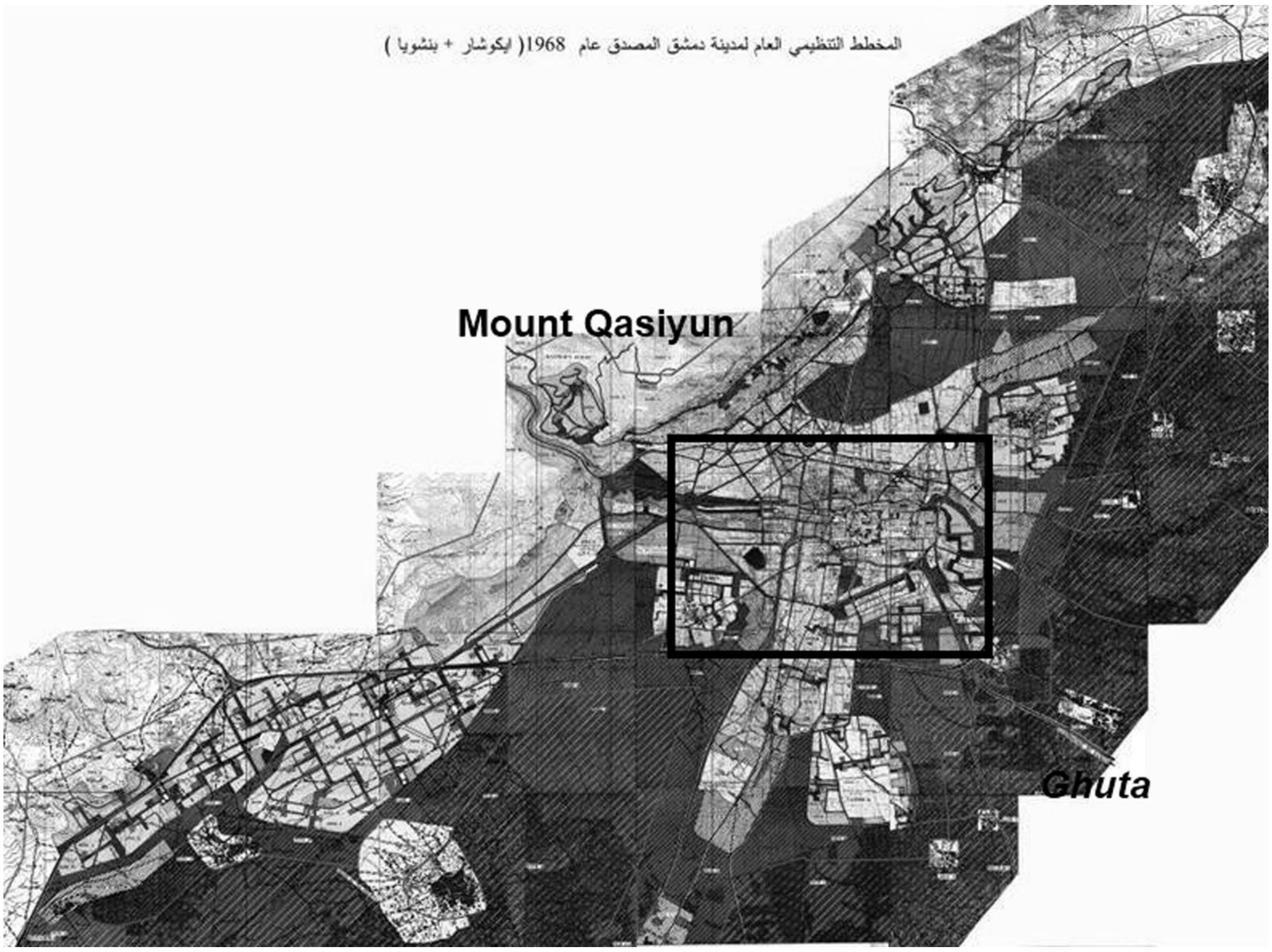
المخطط التنظيمي العام لمدينة دمشق المصدق عام 1968(ايكوشار + بنشويا)
Mount Qasiyun
Ghuta

Figure 12. The Ecochard and Banshoya master plan for Damascus, 1968. Image source: http://360th.wordpress.com.

The rejection of Morozov's plan, and the call for Ecochard to prepare what would be the new master plan of 1968, reflect exactly the ideological conflict that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s over the development of old Damascus which, as one interviewee put it, ultimately resulted in the loss of heritage. In 1970 this period of political conflict came to an end, establishing a greater security and stability that marked the beginning of a new era in Syrian politics.[25] City planning discourse of the time concentrated on a 'command and control' approach that relied on the production of 'blueprints', or 'master plans' for development activities: hence, 'functionalism and rationalism defined a form of urban zoning in which the segregation of functions became the key concept'.[26]

In catalysing the introduction of new lifestyles, the various aspects of modernity that had been affecting Damascus through colonialism since the 1860s also facilitated the creation of a dichotomy between colonisers and colonised. In the early part of the twentieth century, the upper classes of Damascus wanted to imitate the French colonisers in their way of life, and encouraged urban modernisation by leaving their 'traditional' old houses and moving to newly built modern flats and villas. This strengthened the divide between 'modern' and 'traditional'. In the second half of the twentieth century, Damascus witnessed an influx of rural people who settled in the old city in order to improve their quality of life through finding better-paid jobs. This poor rural population gradually replaced the upper classes, who had by this point moved to European-style neighbourhoods beyond the old city walls, thus accelerating the formation of wealthy areas in new Damascus.[27]

The city continued to expand towards the west and north, and the layout of the new Damascus emphasised modern design principles via wide straight streets, tree-lined avenues and linkage axes. Building typologies also changed, with new forms appearing: these included tenement buildings of three or four floors surrounded by small private gardens and sometimes with commercial activities on the ground floor, and detached buildings such as villas. These areas, such as Abu Rummaneh Boulevard and al-Malki Square (in

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[25] Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 8.

[26] Marlène Ghorayeb, 'The work and influence of Michel Ecochard in Lebanon', in Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (eds), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1998), p. 109.

[27] Degeorge, *Damascus*, p. 289.

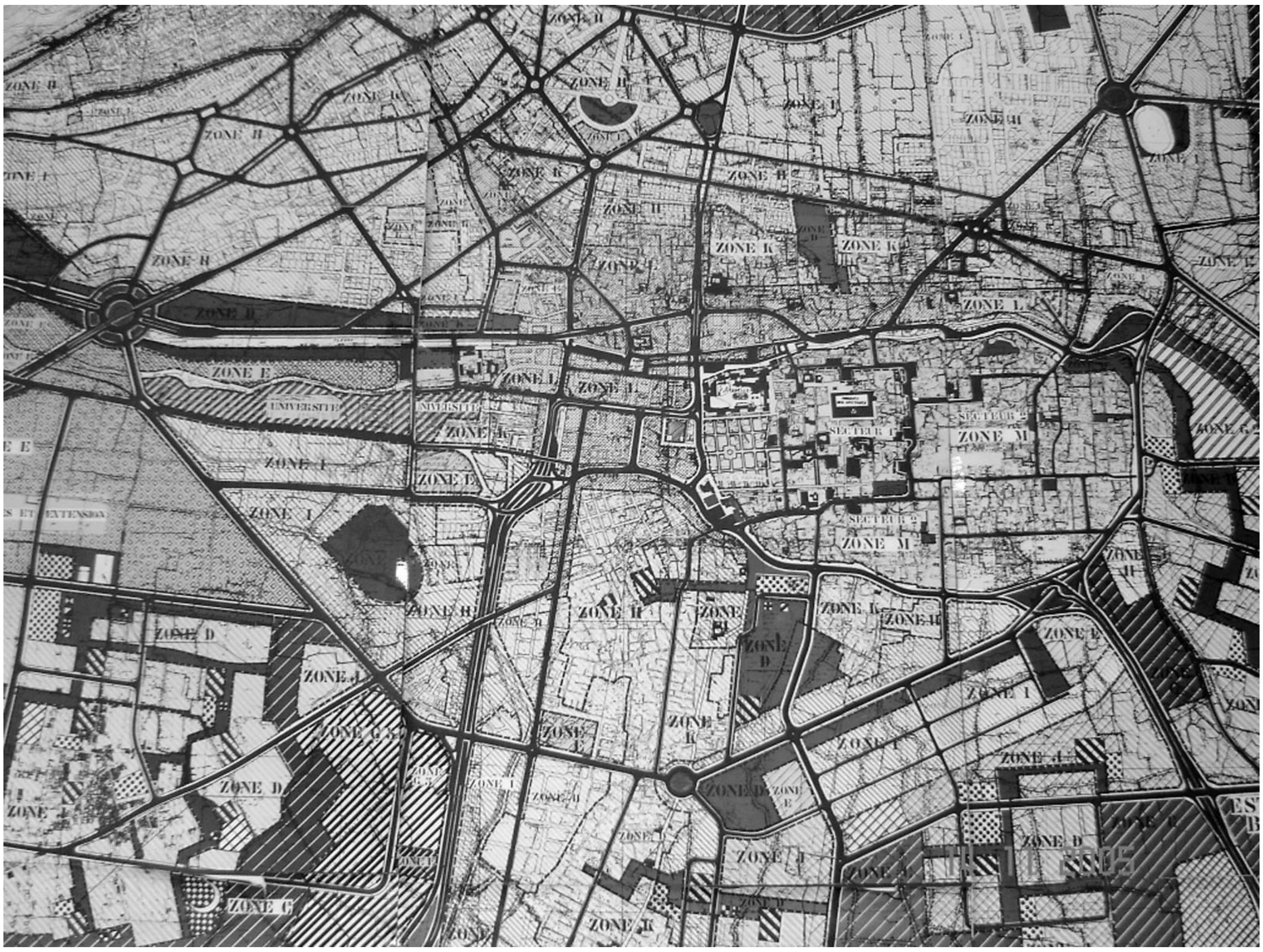

Figure 13. Ecochard and Banshoya master plan, 1968. Image source: http://360th.wordpress.com.

the western areas of the historic core), accommodated the 'upper classes' and were endowed with parks and squares that became well-known as recreational areas (fig. 14).[28]

These areas are characterised by famous roundabouts, such as Umayyad Circle (to the west of the historic core), Sabeh Bahrat and Sahet al-Tahrir (in the northern areas of the historic core). These were formed by the meeting of several wide streets to form very large roundabouts, around each of which would be gathered several administrative, governmental and educational public buildings of seven or more floors. These roundabouts generally have fountains with green areas in the middle (fig. 14). In these contexts, private-public spaces have different morphological and functional aspects from those of the traditional fabric of the old city. Residential neighbourhoods are characterised by private gardens surrounding individual residential units, whose physical access is controlled (although this is not necessarily true of visual access to those same gardens). In these residential areas, social distinction is based on the type and degree of wealth.[29]

Public parks could host cultural and annual festivals, a phenomenon which has flourished particularly during the last five years. One example of this would be the festival held in Umayyad Circle to celebrate Damascus' year as the capital of Arabic Culture 2008. A current point of controversy is the loss of some of the parks in the city centre in order to construct new buildings, as in the case of al-Naanaa Park, which was converted to a car park, and the construction of the Four Seasons hotel in part of al-Menshiyah garden along Beirut Street (fig. 15). Besides cultural activities, squares and wide streets have also been a site for political activities. In recent history public spaces have witnessed many public demonstrations in which 'gatherings ranged from angry marches to peaceful sit-ins and candlelit sleepovers'.[30]

Inside historic Damascus, particularly in the old city and the *extra muros* areas surrounding it, various morphological and functional transformations have taken place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While Ecochard's master plan solved some problems, it also created new

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[28] Christa Salamandra, *A New Old Damascus: Authenticity and Distinction in Urban Syria* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 39.

[29] *Ibid*., pp. 28, 41.

[30] Marlin Dick, 'Syria: Allowing an Outlet for Civil Society', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31/4 (2002), pp. 58–62.

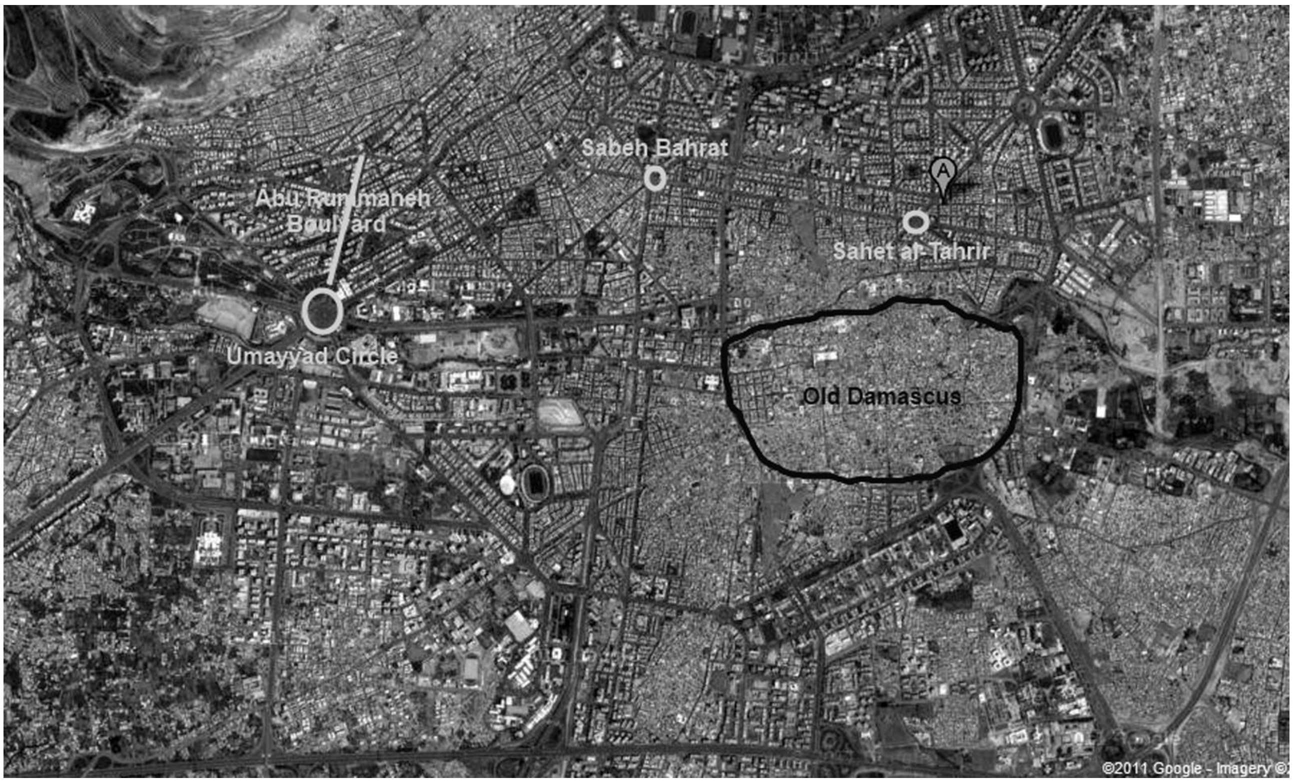

Figure 14. Satellite view of Damascus in 2011 showing old Damascus surrounded by new areas developed according to modern design principles. Adapted by the author using www.googleearthmap.com.

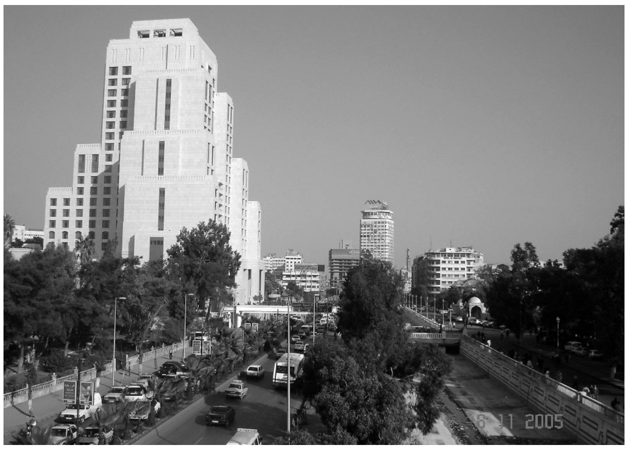

Figure 15. The Four Seasons Hotel, built in a public garden beside the Barada River.

ones.[31] The central theme of the Ecochard plan was to improve the transport network and strengthen functionality, declaring that 'everywhere significant areas need to be cleared, for various reasons: aesthetic, or to improve traffic circulation, safety, or links with the rest of the city'.[32] The second Ecochard plan proposed a new road – al-Thawra Street – to reduce congestion in al-Nasser Street and connect the northern and southern parts of the city directly. Implementing al-Thawra Street involved cutting the *suq* in Saroudja (a northern *extra muros* district) into two parts. Many houses were demolished and many public spaces were torn down. The al-Khuja *suq*, in front of the citadel, was demolished to make room for al-Thawra Street, and to show off the western façade of the citadel (figs 16, 17 and 18).

The second plan also emphasised monumentality. This

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[31] A contradiction is noted between the attitudes of the Western literature and the local literature towards the Ecochard plan. Arabic literature suggests that Ecochard was considered a professional who had the experience to deal with the urban development issues of Damascus, particularly the historic fabric (al-Rihawi, *Damascus*, p. 88). According to one interviewee, it was Ecochard who called for a stop to the demolition of the historic fabric inside the city wall, and to upgrade the resulting cleared areas as gardens or car parks. However, the French author Gérard Degeorge (*Damascus*, p. 291) claims that through 'paying scant regard to the integrity of the urban fabric, and neglecting the deep-rooted values of a living historic city, the Ecochard plan administered a coup de grace to its unity and architectural coherence'.

[32] Michel Ecochard and Gyoji Banshoya, 'The Director Plan of Damascus, Justification Report' (governmental report, Damascus, 1968), p. 108.

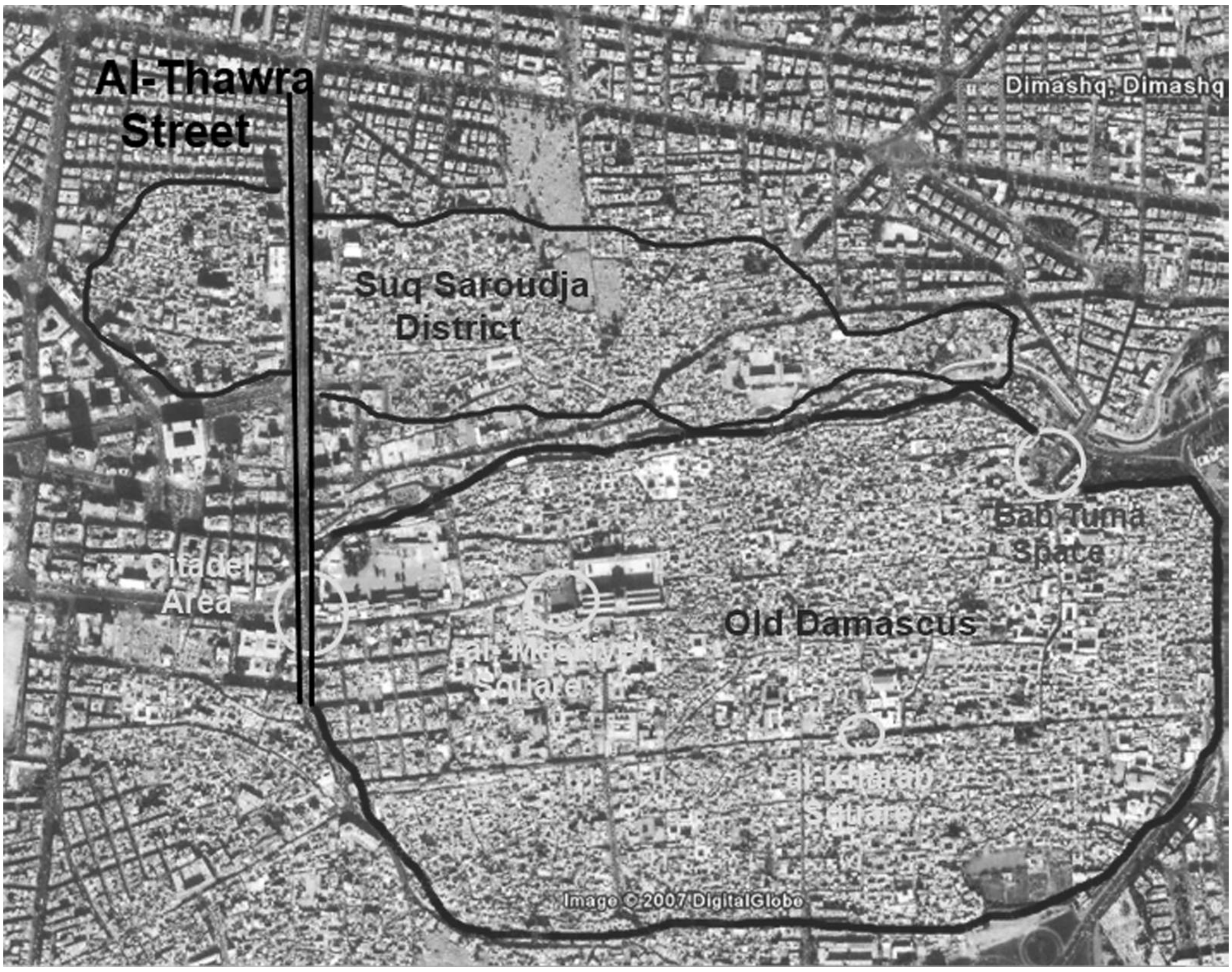

Figure 16. Al-Thawra Street as envisaged in the Ecochard and Banshoya plan (1968), cutting through the northern district. Adapted by the author using www.googleearthmap.com.

lay in direct contrast to conceptual understandings of the traditional city layout, which did not privilege historic monuments with clear sightlines and empty space around them as the Ecochard plan proposed to do. Nonetheless, his concept was applied and the area surrounding the Umayyad mosque was cleared to show the mosque as an important monument within al-Meskiyeh Square. Other examples of this phenomenon include al-Kharab Square, the Citadel and the area around Bab Tuma, in which many houses were demolished to display monuments such as a gate or an arch. Moreover, the plan also emphasised the old city wall as a physical barrier, by proposing a ring road to surround the old city. Part of this ring road was built: some interviewees considered that implementing the remaining parts of the ring road would be a disaster, with serious environmental and social implications. As one professional interviewee noted, ‘the ring road will turn the old city into an island which is isolated from its surroundings, thus cutting the “life veins” of the city’.

The incomplete implementation of Ecochard and Banshoya’s 1968 plan led to the creation of some open spaces, particularly on the edge of the old city, which need upgrading or redesigning. These open spaces have not been used effectively within the formation of an integrated network of public space. In other words, because the transformation of these spaces was not adequately delivered, they have become open wounds in the historic fabric: deteriorating, ‘lost spaces’ like those that Trancik defined as undesirable spaces in need of redesign (see figs 18 and 19).[33]

One of the major transformations of function that has taken place in the traditional organic form of old Damascus is the conversion of many houses, *khans* and *hammams* into warehouses, restaurants and small-scale industrial sites.[34] Another significant transformation has been the break in the hierarchy of public space. A typical example illustrating these changes is the transformation of the Bab Tuma quarter since the 1980s. According to most of the interviews held with officials in the Damascus Governorate and Old Damascus Directorate, the Bab Tuma quarter is still mainly residential: seventy percent of land use is for residential

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[33] Roger Trancik, *Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986).

[34] Degeorge, *Damascus*, p. 290.

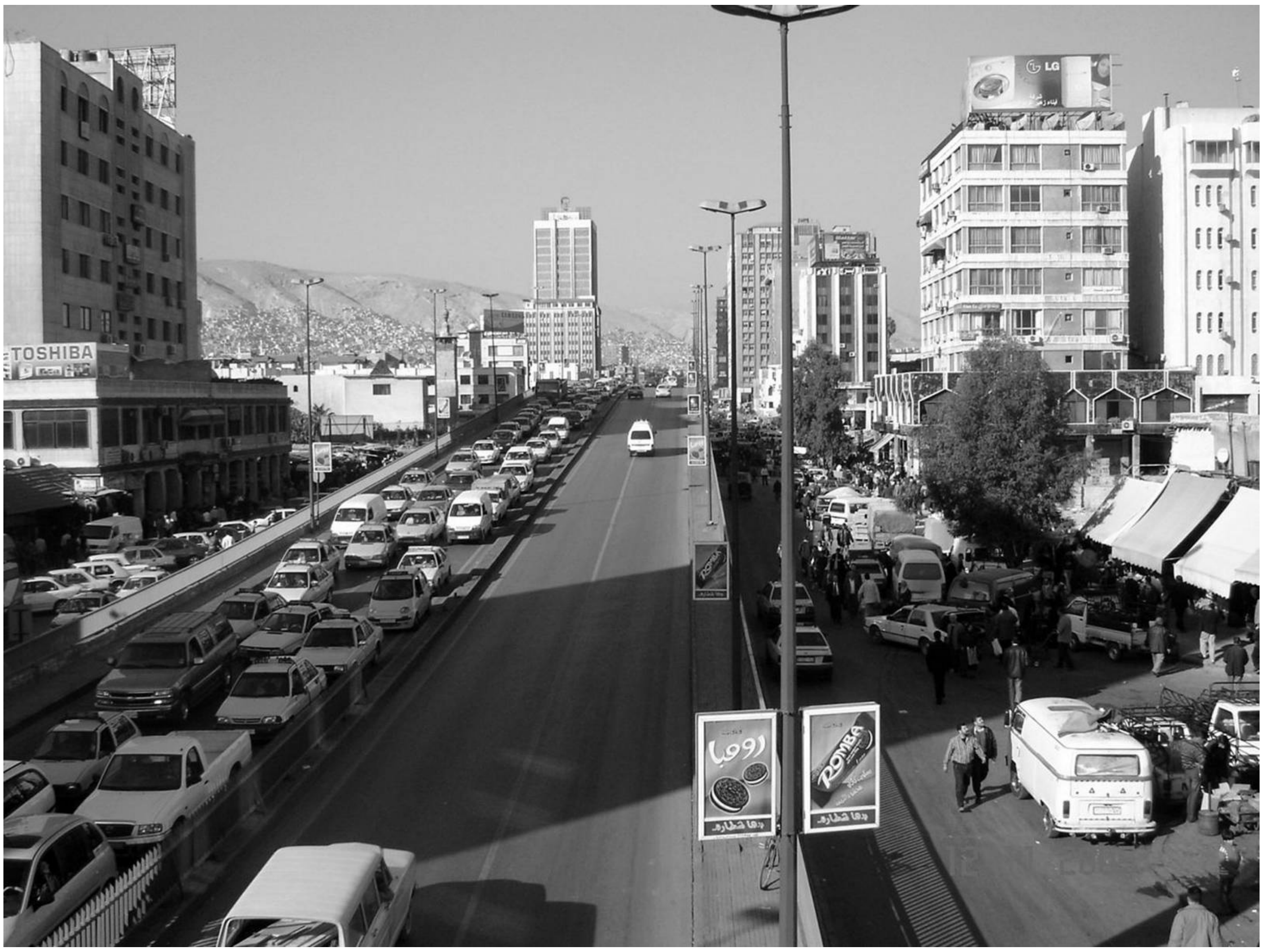

Figure 17. Al-Thawra Street looking from south to north.

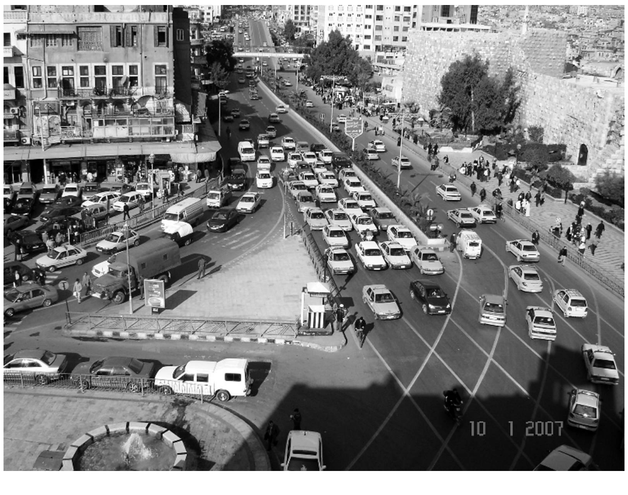

Figure 18. The Citadel area.

purposes.[35] Thus, the degree of functional transformation that has occurred within the quarter – i.e. from residential to other uses – is relatively low. However, this relatively low level of change in use still has a big impact on the nature of the open space contained within the area. Those open spaces, which formerly encompassed public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces, have been reduced to public and semi-public open space only, as houses became restaurants and their courtyards became public. This change in function has not only led to changes in the nature of open spaces within the historic fabric, but has also had negative consequences on the residents' lives because of the noise and pollution produced by car traffic, and the increasing strain on open space caused by this. All of these phenomena have drastically reduced the quality of life for residents of the area, which has in turn formed a major factor in the movement of many residents out of the old city.

Generally, the transformation of residential houses into restaurants in the old city reflects the advance of modernity through the growth of new leisure practices in recent

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[35] The Directorate of Old Damascus (DOD), Damascus Governorate (DG) and Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE), *Preliminary study for the rehabilitation of the Old City of Damascus*, (2006).

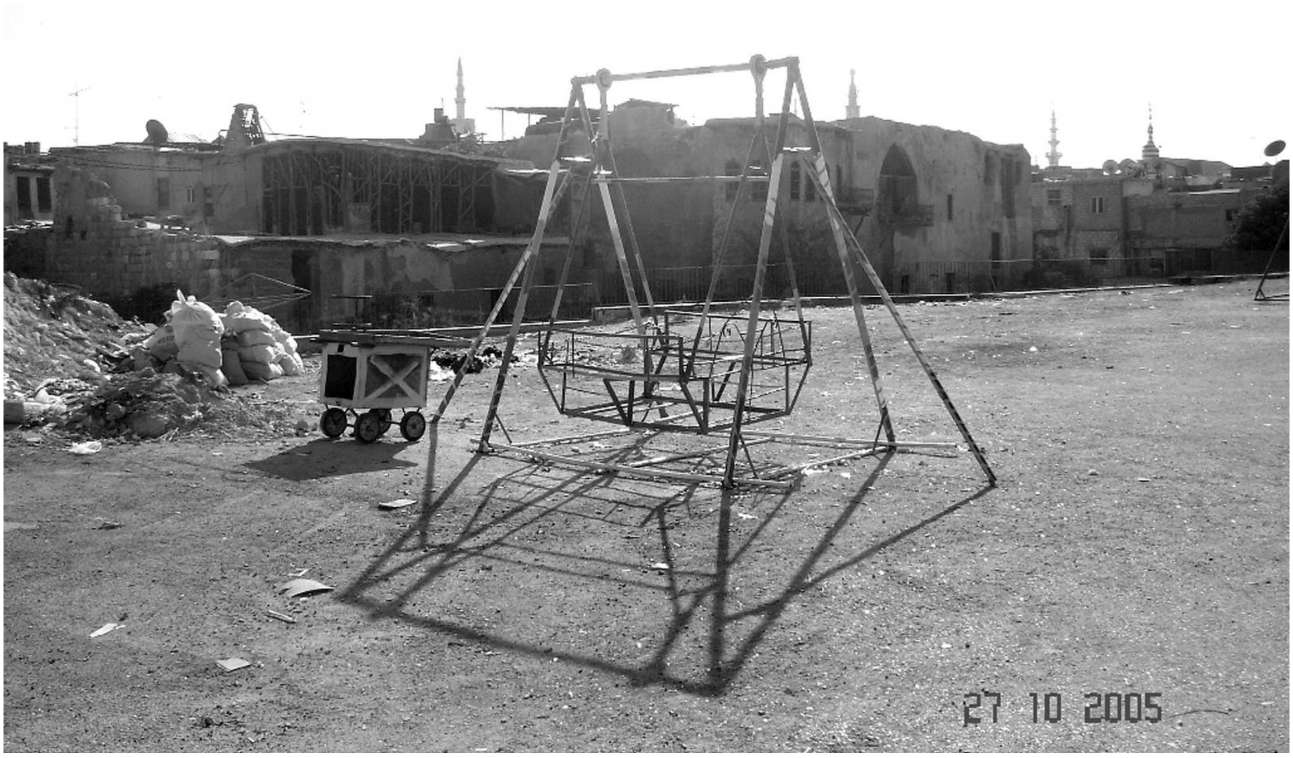

Figure 19. A 'lost' space near the Barada River.

decades.[36] In restaurants, people share their personal spaces in order to establish a shared semi-private space in the middle of a public area. However, social activity within new restaurants and cafés has changed. The products of modern technology have now invaded socialising in restaurants: wide television screens are displayed to broadcast music videos and world events. Mobile phones are tools to communicate with the world outside, so face-to-face orientation and direct visual contacts are commonly disrupted by means of technology. In contemporary Damascus, where consciousness of social status has become increasingly acute, these public spaces have become theatres of social life in which the outward manifestations of status and wealth are displayed.

The functional transformation of many residential houses in the old city to business use has attracted a lot of vehicular traffic in order to transport goods, products and different materials, as well as for shopping and tourism. Residential use of properties in the old city as a whole dropped by thirty percent in seventy years, from sixty thousand inhabitants in 1936 to forty thousand in 2005, and the total area of the old city that has been converted from residential to commercial use is thirty-two hectares.[37] As a consequence, public spaces have been increasingly dominated by car movement and/or are used as parking lots. Enlargement of the spaces designated for vehicle circulation has impacted negatively on social space, and has naturally affected social activities conducted in public spaces.

At the same time, environmental deterioration caused by rapid industrialisation has accelerated the natural flow of the Barada and increased ground water levels, as well as air pollution. The allocation of industrial areas along the major canals means that polluted water is discharged directly into surface canals.[38] These environmental problems have contributed to the loss of outdoor spaces for social activities, such as the cafés along the Barada River and various public gardens, which previously brought richness and variety to public life.

Since the 1990s, Syria has entered a transitional period, in which the country is trying to restore social freedoms and implement economic reforms bringing work and prosperity, as well as generating a new international image. In parallel with these changes, the Prime Minister of Syria has stated that the government's main objective is to undertake a comprehensive reform process within the administrative and economic structures of the government.[39] A major economic reform has focused on the shift from a command economy to a market economy. Tourism is supposed to play a greater role in the Syrian economy, with Damascus's unique architectural heritage being re-valued and promoted as a great national resource which contributes to the tourism sector. However, this transitional period has recently been profoundly disrupted by social unrest and radical

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[36] Salamandra, *New Old Damascus*, p. 74.

[37] DOD, DG and MLAE, *Preliminary study*, p. 60.

[38] Masanori Naito, 'Urbanization and its Implication on the Socio-economic Structure in the Syrian Cities: A Comparative Study on Damascus and Aleppo', in Yukawa Takeshi (ed.), *Urbanism in Islam (ICUIT). Selected papers from the proceedings of International conference held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center* (Tokyo: 1989), pp. 440–447.

[39] *Emerging Syria* 2005 (London: Oxford Business Group, 2005).

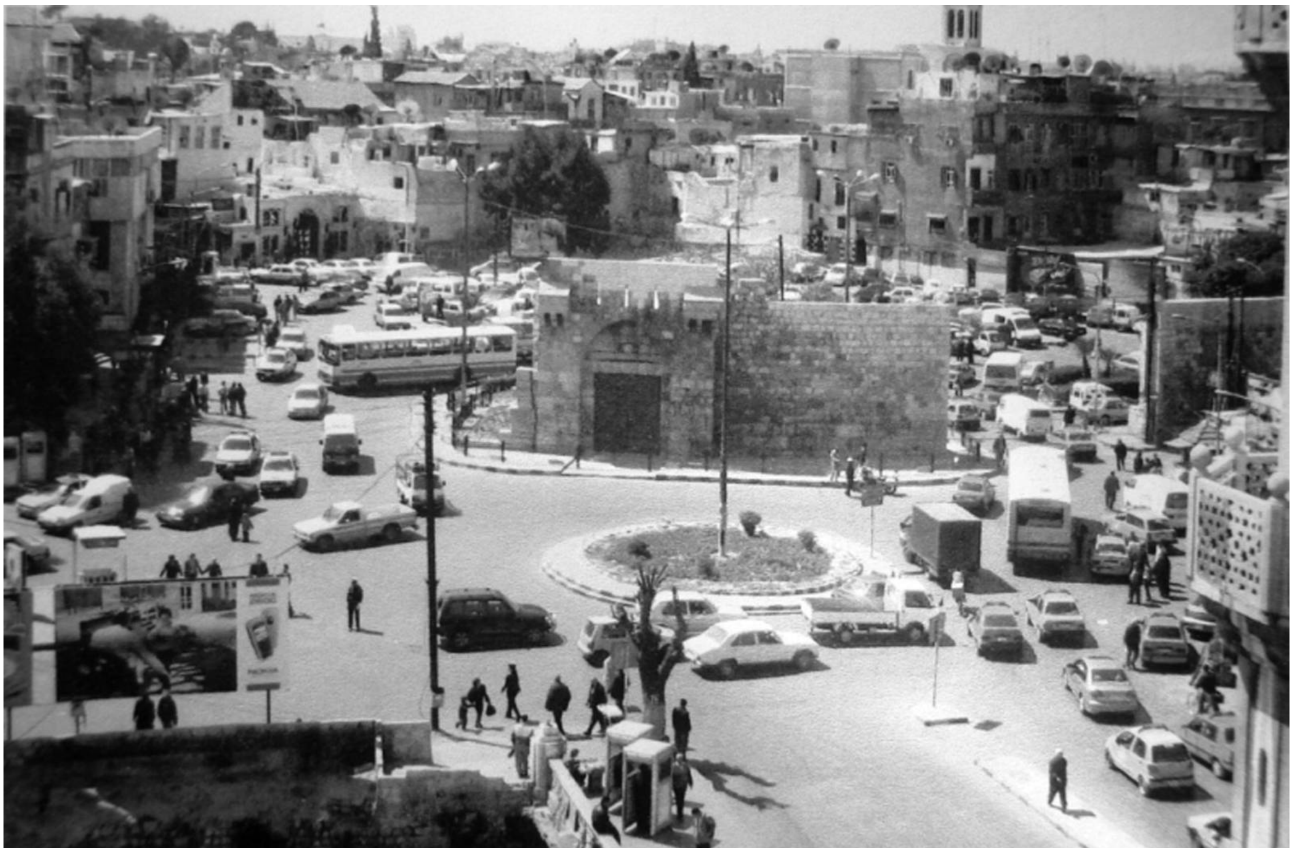

Figure 20. The area around Bab Tuma, underdesigned and with poor facilities for social activities.

events. These have exposed Syria to regional tensions and increasing pressure from external forces, foregrounding internal developments as hard challenges that the country has to deal with.

Within these trends 'the public space was always under threat from the privatisation of space by individual encroachments or by powerful interest'.[40] The old city of Damascus is one of the oldest urban areas in the world still in residential use, and for this reason 'use' and 'traditional' values have been highlighted within this study. In terms of policy development, functional and exchange values in the market appear to be increasingly determining the interests of the local authorities. At the same time, recent events and pressures have subjected the public realm to a mix of anxieties concerning the uncertainty of the present situation, but also the hope of a better future that will bring wider freedom with more reforms. Public spaces are the stages that display these tensions.

Finally, to recapitulate on the above description and analysis, table 1 provides a summary of the historical evolution of public space in Damascus.

Reflection

This paper has so far reviewed specific literature on Damascus which includes morphological and functional analysis as well as links to the historical backgrounds of political, economic and social developments. This method was employed to achieve a deeper understanding of the changing nature of the public realm and its political and socioeconomic context.

It has been shown that urban forms in Damascus, to the beginning of the twentieth century, developed in response to social and environmental factors and the relative weakness of any imposed building legislations and planning regulations, but also exhibited strong and deeply embedded forms of social control. The historic core had a relatively small population and very high density of 'acquaintanceship' within a wealth of private and parochial or communal realms. The physical transformation of these realms began with the impact of European models of modernity from c. 1800, whereby old Damascus witnessed an increasing 'publicness' in its public spaces, through the formation of new centres composed of public and residential blocks and streets. Gardens, cinemas and theatres were public spaces which introduced new ways of socialising outside the 'traditional' venues for such activities.

In the period following independence, Damascus initially struggled to establish political stability, but the state in time became active in both urban planning and the processes of urban development. The application of master plans

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[40] Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces*, p. 213.

Table 1. Historical evolution of public space and public realm in Damascus

Historical periods		***Political, socio-economic changes***	***Planning system***	***Key features of urban form***
Aramaic Assyrians Chaldeans Persian Greeks Romans Byzantines				Rectangular shape Wall Seven gates Urban centres Organic form
Umayyad Abbasid Fatimid Ayyubid Mamluk Ottoman		Islamic rule Sub communities Internal markets Social segregation	No building regulations Strong socio-cultural control Ecological+ Environmental design principles	Dominant organic form Historic core with some suburbs outside the wall Clusters of neighbourhoods Neighbourhood as a unit Main architectural elements: 1. Citadel 2. The gates 3. The wall 4.Umayyad Mosque 5. *Suq*s. 6. Courtyard houses
French Independence	1800 1947	Modernity European involvement Incorporated into the broader economy Capitalism	‘*Tanzimat*’ reform Application of modern architecture theories Beaux Arts concepts	Complex of public buildings Tikkiyeha (Hijaz rail station- Saraye building) Wide streets (al-Nasser Street) Square (al-Marjeh Square) Straight streets with intersections forming squares (Baghdad Street) Public gardens Cinemas, theatres Dualism: traditional/modern
Political conflicts		Population growth Arab socialist	Socialist planning model	New Damascus: lots of public spaces in squares and wide avenues
	1963	International migration Rural-urban migration	A series of five-year plans	Old Damascus: historical city enters an accelerated process of decline
Political stability		Arab socialist?	‘Master plans’ Functional zoning	Monumentality
	1970	Transitory to market economy	Centralisation Planning ‘command and control’ approach	
	1990		Modernisation	

Historical periods		***Key features of public space and public realm***
Aramaic		Agora Forum Notable centres for public life
Assyrians		
Chaldeans		
Persian		
Greeks		
Romans		
Byzantines		
Umayyad		*Suwayqa* – public space Hierarchy in movement from public space (main street) to semi-public space (*darb*) to semi-private space (cul-de-sac) to private space (courtyard) Social and movement spaces overlapping Courtyard houses (private realms) Courtyards of mosques and khans (parochial and public realms) Cafés and public baths – public life Strong line between public and private
Abbasid		
Fatimid		
Ayyubid		
Mamluk		
Ottoman		
	1800	Increasing ‘publicness’ of public space Enlargement of movement space Administrative – governmental city centre (Marjeh Square) Public gardens Cinemas and theatres Wide avenues meet to form squares Culture – administrative centres (*Bawabit Salihiyye*) Shift in gendered use of spaces
French		
Independence	1947	
Political conflicts		Change in distinction between public and private Shifts in realms: change of private realms to public realm Change in nature of spaces: private and semi-private public changed to semi-public and public spaces Lost spaces Greater enlargement of movement space affecting social space
	1963	
Political stability		
	1970	

was an attempt to modernise the planning system through the introduction of new tools; however, these were not always applicable to culturally different public spaces. Public space presents a clash between modernisation and tradition at many levels and in many ways. At the city level, aspects of modernity came through colonialism to affect different aspects of public space and public life, shifting the line between public and private spheres, introducing new building forms and new types of movements to public space. Public spaces in the historic fabric have developed in response to unique contemporary conditions, which could be summarised in one word: modernisation. Introducing vehicles was an attempt to modernise the mobility system, which was limited originally to pedestrian and animal movement. Gradually, movement spaces were enlarged and experienced new types of movement, thus reducing the possibility and the space for socialising functions. Opening hotels and restaurants is one way to modernise the old city and give it a new face, but this in turn affects the nature of public space and often exposes what was a parochial or communal realm to increasing numbers of strangers. All of these new modernising aspects are still struggling with the old uses of the spaces to find a way to settle together in the historic city of Damascus.

THE EARLIEST QUR'ANIC SCRIPTS

Marcus Fraser

This paper presents some preliminary observations on the Arabic scripts used in the earliest period of the Islamic era. The study focuses on Qur'an manuscripts and fragments written on parchment in so-called Hijazi scripts, and examines individual letter-forms, as well as words and the overall character of the scripts in relation both to each other and to contemporary scripts used on non-Qur'anic materials such as papyrus documents, coins, stone inscriptions and architecture. The aim of the overall study is to build up an accurate and broad-based survey of the scripts used in the earliest Islamic period, to attempt to establish their dating, and to describe any developmental features that emerge.

Arabic palaeography has piqued the interest of many scholars over the centuries. In terms of research into Qur'ans in so-called Hijazi scripts, Michele Amari in the early nineteenth century was perhaps the first European scholar to focus on this area, and over the last century research has been carried out by, among others, Bernhard Moritz,[1] Nabia Abbott,[2] Max van Berchem,[3] Giorgio Levi della Vida,[4] Joseph von Karabacek,[5] Adolf Grohmann,[6] Salahuddin Munajjid,[7] François Déroche,[8] Beatrice Gruendler[9] and Estelle Whelan,[10] while other authors have focused on the orthographic and textual aspects of the material,[11] and there are many studies of the large corpus of early Arabic papyri.[12] But none of these constitutes a comprehensive study of the physical morphology of individual letters and words in the quite extensive corpus of Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic source material from the early period. A greater understanding of early scripts and the development of calligraphy could be gained through a comprehensive examination of early Arabic letter forms and word forms, and the establishment of an alphabet of letters, words and script styles used on different materials during this period.

For the sake of clarity and simplicity this study will employ the terms 'Hijazi' and 'Kufic' to describe certain scripts used on early Qur'ans in the same sense that those labels have been generally understood for the past few decades. This paper will not enter into the debate on their nomenclature.[13]

The main fragments and groups of leaves in Hijazi scripts that will be referred to throughout this paper are in London

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[1] Bernhard Moritz, *Arabic Palaeography: A Collection of Arabic Texts from the First Century of the Hidjra until the Year 1000* (Cairo: Publications of the Khedivial Library, no. 16, 1905).

[2] Nabia Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Kur'anic development with a full description of the Kur'an manuscripts in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939); *eadem*, 'Arabic Palaeography', *Ars Islamica*, 8 (1941), pp. 65–104.

[3] Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1894).

[4] Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Frammenti coranici in caraterre cufico nella Biblioteca Vaticana (Studi et testi CXXXII)* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947).

[5] Joseph von Karabacek, 'Arabic Palaeography', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, XX (1906), pp. 131–148.

[6] Adolf Grohmann, 'The Problem of Dating Early Qur'ans', *Der Islam,* 33 (1958), pp. 213–231; *idem*, *Arabische Paläographie*, in two volumes (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus, 1967 and 1971).

[7] Salahuddin al-Munajjid, *Etudes de Paleographie Arabe* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1972).

[8] François Déroche, 'Les écritures coraniques anciennes: Bilan et perspectives', *Revue des études islamiques*, XLVIII/ 2 (1980), pp. 207–224; *idem*, *Les manuscrits du Coran: Aux origines de la calligraphie coranique (Bibliothèque nationale, Catalogues des manuscrits arabes, Deuxième partie: Manuscrits musulmans, I/I)* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1983); *idem*, 'Collections des manuscrits anciens á Istanbul: Rapport préliminaire', in Janine Sourdel-Thomine (ed.), *Etudes médiévales et patrimoine turc* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1983), pp. 145–165; *idem*, 'A propos d'une série des manuscrits coraniques anciens', *Les manuscrits du Moyen-Orient (Varia Turcica, VIII)* (Istanbul/Paris: Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul, 1989), pp. 101–111; *idem*, *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'ans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries AD* (London: Azimuth/ Nour Foundation, 1992).

[9] Beatrice Gruendler, *The development of the Arabic scripts: from the Nabatean era to the first Islamic century according to dated texts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

[10] Estelle Whelan, 'Writing the Word of God', *Ars Orientalis*, 20 (1990), pp. 113–147; *eadem*, 'Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'an', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118 (1998), pp. 1–14.

[11] For example, Alan Jones, 'The Dotting of a Script and the Dating of an Era: The Strange Neglect of PERF 558', *Islamic Culture*, LXXII/4 (October 1998), pp. 95–103. Yasin Dutton has written several articles on the textual and orthographic analyses of this material: 'Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qur'an Manuscripts, Part I', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 1/1 (1999), pp. 115–140; *idem*, 'Red Dots, Green Dots, Yellow Dots and Blue: Some Reflections on the Vocalisation of Early Qur'an Manuscripts, Part II', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2/1 (2000), pp. 1–24; *idem*, 'An Early *Mushaf* According to the Reading of Ibn 'Amir', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 3/1 (2001), pp. 71–90; 'Some Notes on the British Library's "Oldest Qur'an Manuscript" (Or.2165)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 6/1 (2004), pp. 43–71. For a related article see Intisar A. Rabb, 'Non-Canonical Readings of the Qur'an: Recognition and Authenticity (The Himsi Reading)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 8/2 (2006), pp. 84–127.

[12] There are a very large number of books and articles on this topic. For a bibliography see Geoffrey Khan, *Selected Arabic Papyri* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 11–22.

[13] The terms Hijazi and Kufic have been disputed by various authors as being inaccurate and out of date. However, this author believes that these terms still describe the scripts in question with a greater universal degree of understanding than the other terms that have been proposed, and that until more satisfactory and accurate terms are found, these will continue to be the most useful.

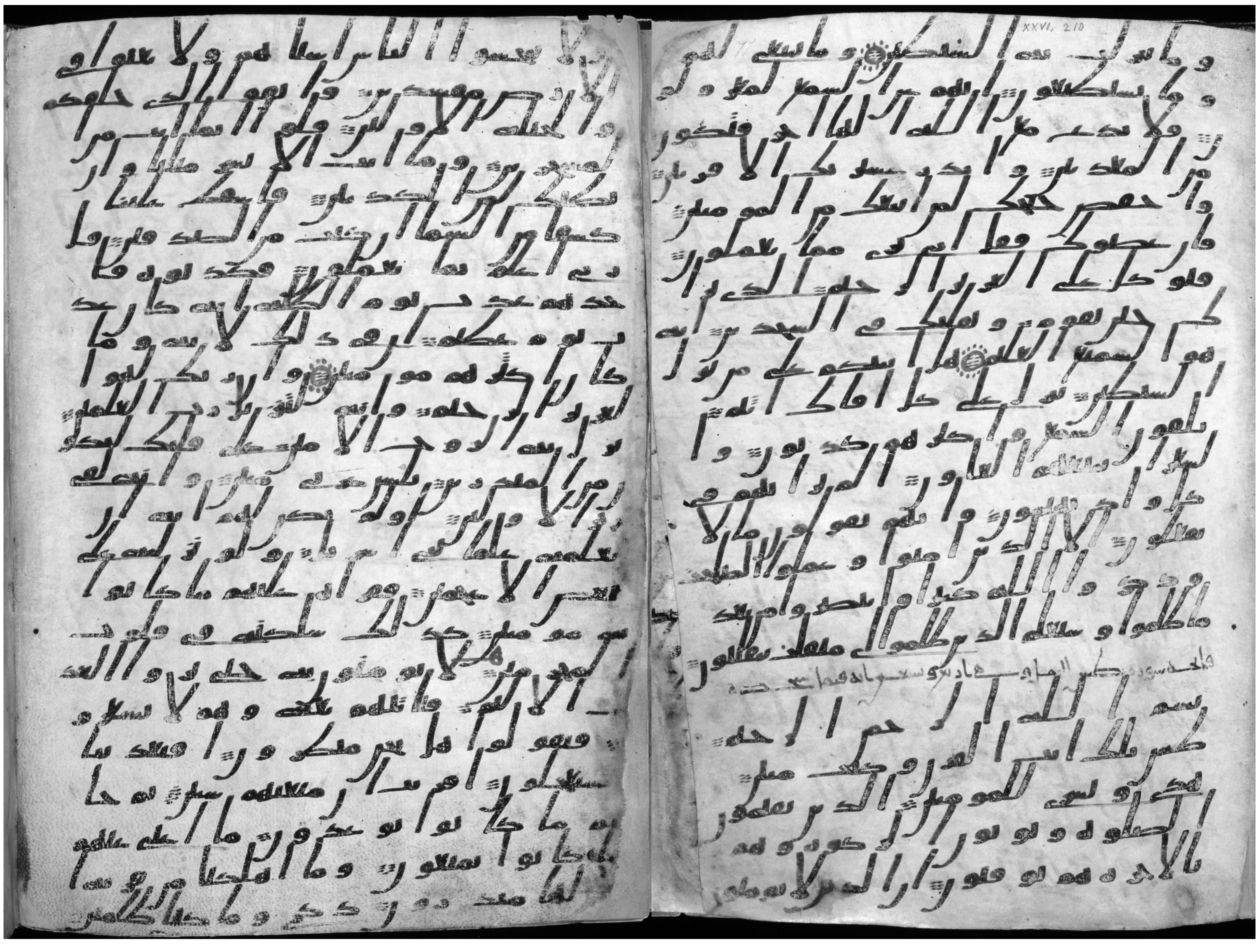

Figure 1. Qur'an folios. British Library, London, Or.2165, 31.5 x 21.5cm. Same hand as Kuwait, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, LNS.19.CA. Image © British Library Board, all rights reserved.

(fig. 1),[14] Paris (fig. 2),[15] Dublin (see fig. 3),[16] San'a',[17] Copenhagen (fig. 4),[18] Berlin (see fig. 3),[19] St Petersburg,[20] the Vatican (see fig. 2),[21] Cairo,[22] Kuwait (fig. 5),[23] and Doha (see fig. 3),[24] as well as certain private collections (see illustrations of some of these in figs 3 and 4).[25] Other groups of leaves and fragments that have not been researched for this paper (but will be discussed in future studies by the present author) are in Istanbul,[26] Chicago,[27] Bahrain,[28] Tashkent, and Katta Langar.

The papyrus documents mentioned above are fragmentary, but a very small number are dated to the first century Hijri. In this study only definitely dated papyri are being used for comparison: the papyrus documents which have been dated stylistically by Grohmann, Geoffrey Khan and others are to be avoided for the moment, as it is nonsensical to try to date Qur'anic scripts stylistically using as comparative material scripts on documents which are themselves dated stylistically. The two firmly dated examples used in this article are PERF 558 in the Vienna National Library (fig. 6) and P.Berol 15002 in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (fig. 7), both dated 22 H/642 CE.

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[14] The British Library, London.

[15] Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

[16] The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

[17] Dar al-Makhtutat Collections, from the 1967–1972 discoveries in the roof of the Great Mosque, San'a'.

[18] The David Collection, Copenhagen.

[19] Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

[20] Library of the Oriental Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg.

[21] The Vatican Library.

[22] Dar al-Kutub, National Library, General Egyptian Book Organisation, Cairo.

[23] The Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait, and Al-Sabah Collection, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyya, Kuwait.

[24] Museum of Islamic Art, Doha.

[25] Three folios and a section sold at various auction houses and galleries in London between 1992 and 2008, as follows: Sotheby's, London, 23 October 1992, lot 551 (appeared again at Christie's, London, 1 May 2001, lot 12; at Sam Fogg Gallery, London, in 2003 [Catalogue 27, *Islamic Calligraphy*]; now in the David Collection, Copenhagen); Sotheby's, London, 22 October 1993, lots 31 and 34; Bonhams, London, 11 October 2000, lot 13; Christie's, London, 8 April 2008, lot 20.

[26] Topkapı Saray Library and Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi. These are very extensive holdings, amongst the largest group in the world, and are highly important for studies of this kind. However, gaining access to them is difficult and attaining good quality images with which to work is almost equally so. It is hoped that it will be possible to examine these in detail in the future.

[27] The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. The group of fragments in Chicago is the one on which Nabia Abbott based much of her research for her seminal work *The Rise of the North Arabic Script*.

[28] Beit al-Qur'an, Bahrain.

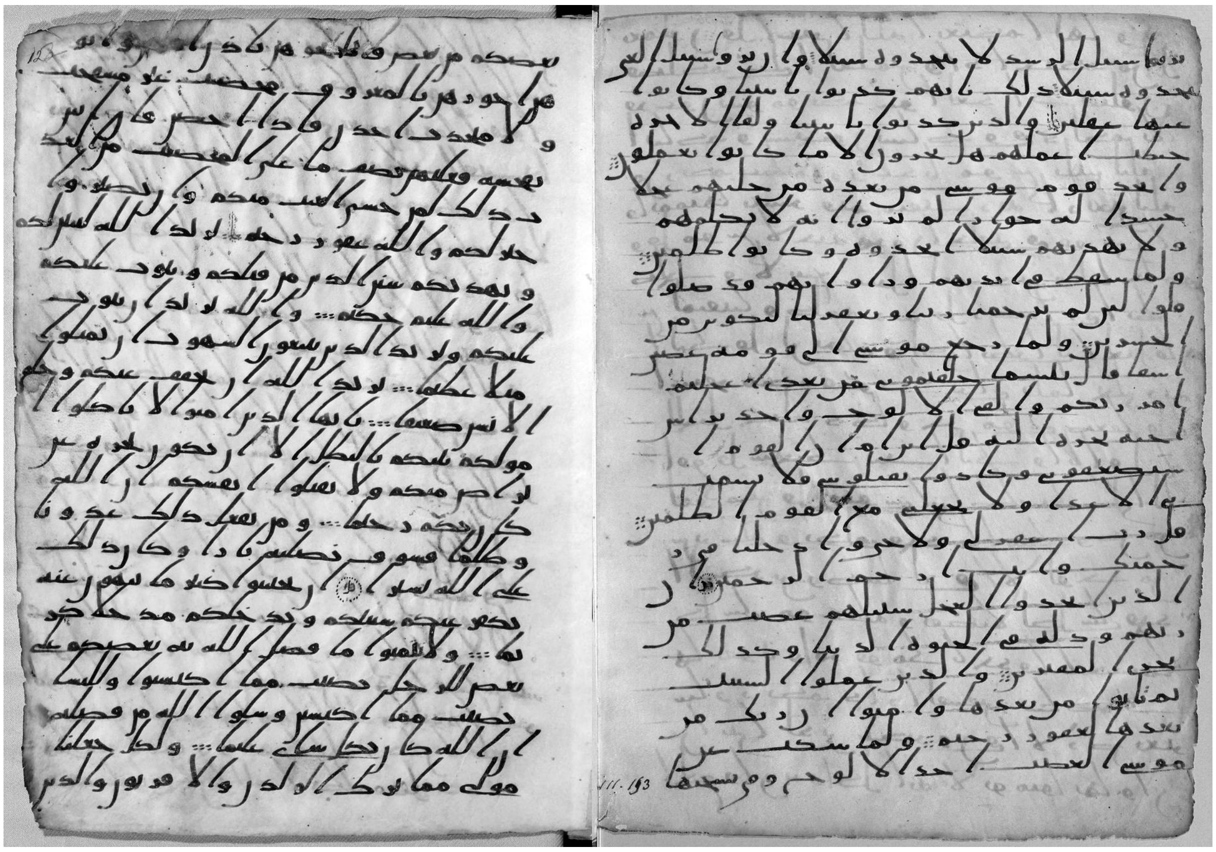

Figure 2. Qur'an folios. Left: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Arabe 328a, 33 x 23cm. Hand A. Same hand as Vatican Ms.1605 Arab and Khalili Collection KFQ60. Right: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Arabe 328a, 33 x 23cm. Hand B. Same hand as Doha MIA, Ms.67.2007.

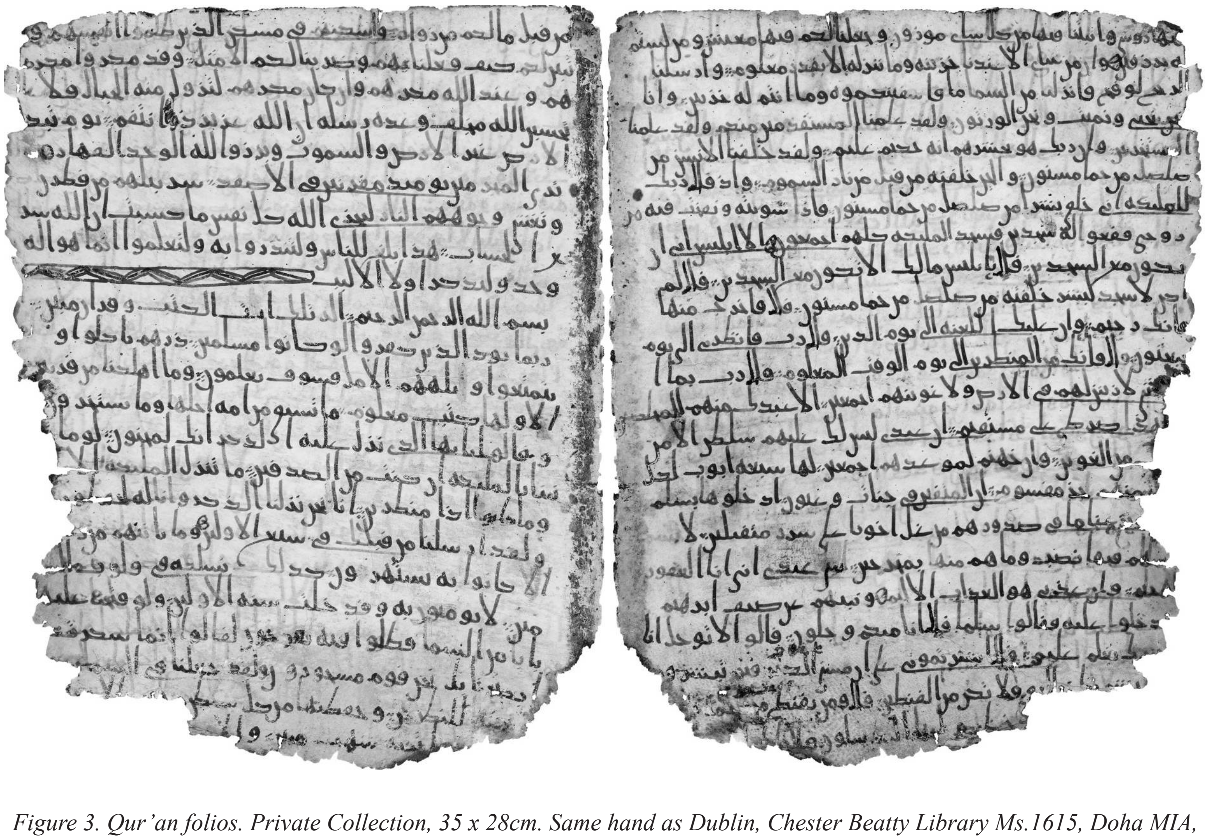

Figure 3. Qur'an folios. Private Collection, 35 x 28cm. Same hand as Dublin, Chester Beatty Library Ms.1615, Doha MIA, Ms.68,69,70.2007, and probably Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms.or.fol.4313, and a fragment in Dar al-Kutub, Cairo National Library (shelf mark unknown). Photo: all rights reserved.

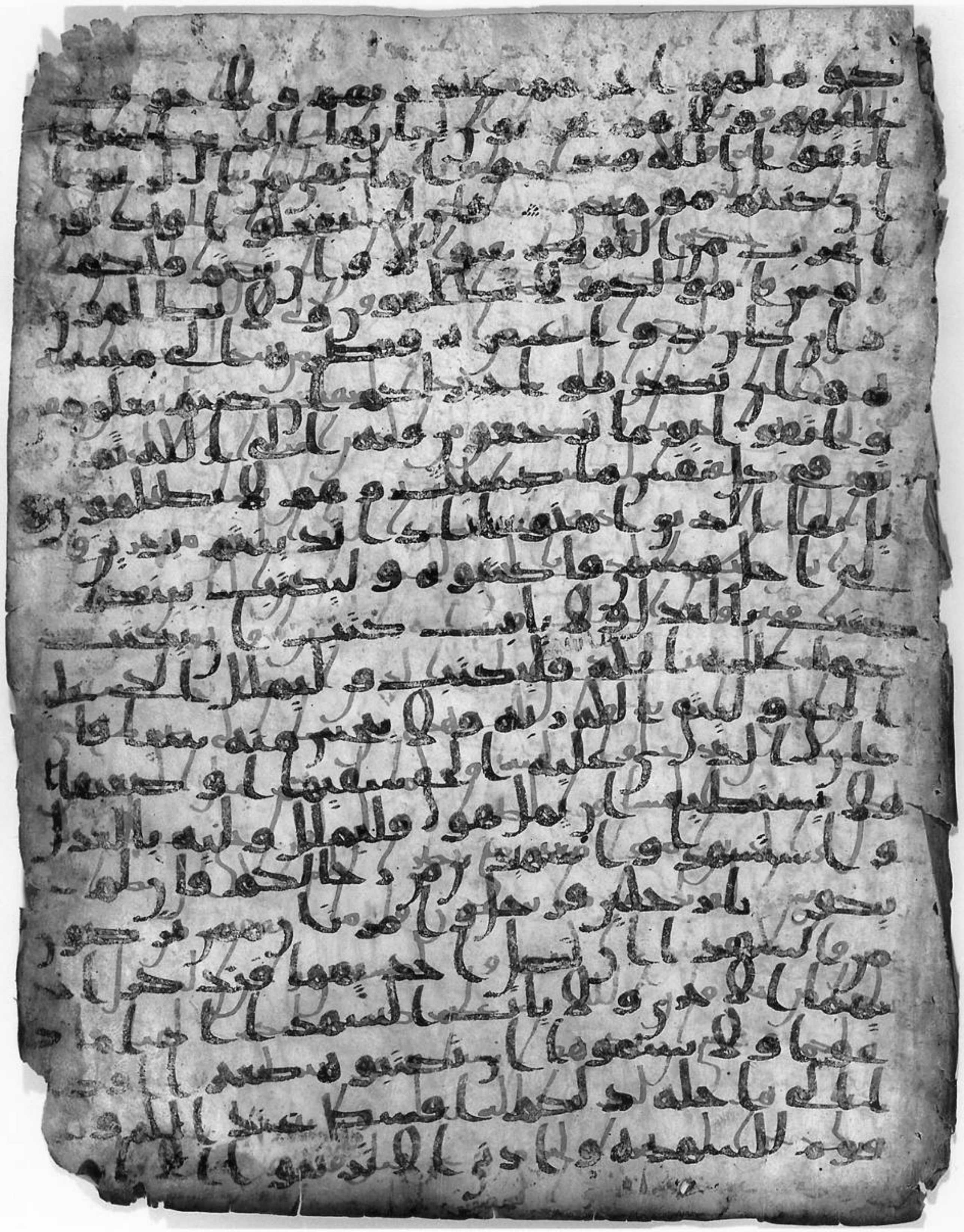

Figure 4. Qur'an folio. David Collection, Copenhagen, inv. 86/2003, 36.6 x 28.2cm. Same hand as San'a', Dar al-Makhtutat, Ms.00-27.

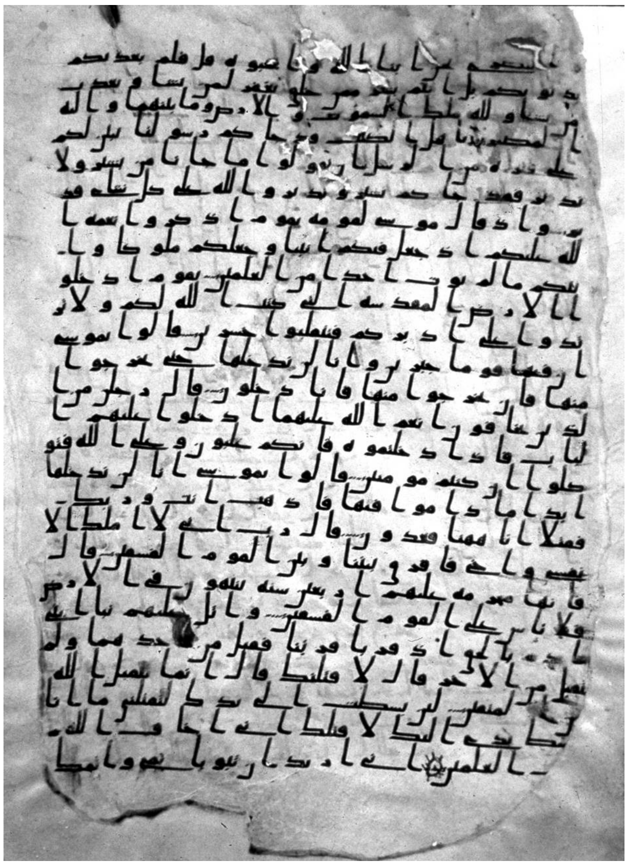

Figure 5. Qur'an folio. Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait, Qur-001-TSR, 48.1 x 35.5cm. Same hand as San'a', Dar al-Makhtutat, ms.00-30. Image courtesy of the Tareq Rajab Museum.

The stone inscriptions used during this period can be divided into three groups: 'official', such as the Umayyad milestones from Palestine/Syria datable to 65–86/685–705; 'semi-official', such as the stone or rock-cut inscriptions from Hafnat al-Abyad in Iraq dated 64/683, and from the dam of Mu'awiya near Ta'if dated 58/668; and 'unofficial', such as rock-cut graffiti from the Ta'if region, of which two are dated 40/660, and a tombstone from Upper Egypt dated 31/651 (see examples in figs 8 and 9). The coins used are pre- and post-reform types in copper, silver and gold from various mints, mostly located in Syria, Iraq and Iran, and dating from 31/651 to 86/705 (see examples in figs 10 and 11).

These different types of non-Qur'anic comparative materials have advantages and disadvantages. The greatest advantage of such materials as a whole is that, unlike all the Qur'an manuscripts under investigation, many of these other objects are dated and we often know where they were made. Coins are particularly useful since they were minted continuously and give the location of the mint, often providing a sequential record of letter-forms and locations. One of the disadvantages, at least of epigraphy on stone and coins, is that the materials and methods used for inscribing the epigraphy affect, to a certain extent, the way the letters are formed. Rather than drawing the nib of a stylus across a relatively smooth piece of parchment with a free hand, the stone-mason must cut the lettering into the stone with a metal chisel, while the die-engraver of the coins must not only cut the lettering into a metal die stamp, but in mirror-image too. Furthermore, on coins the actual space available for the letters and words, and the shape of that space, is fixed and artificial. With this material there is an additional problem in terms of methodology: the whole process is open to the risk of the researcher sifting the evidence until he or she finds the desired examples, ignoring others that might not fit in with an emerging sequence or pattern. These limitations notwithstanding, there is still a great deal that

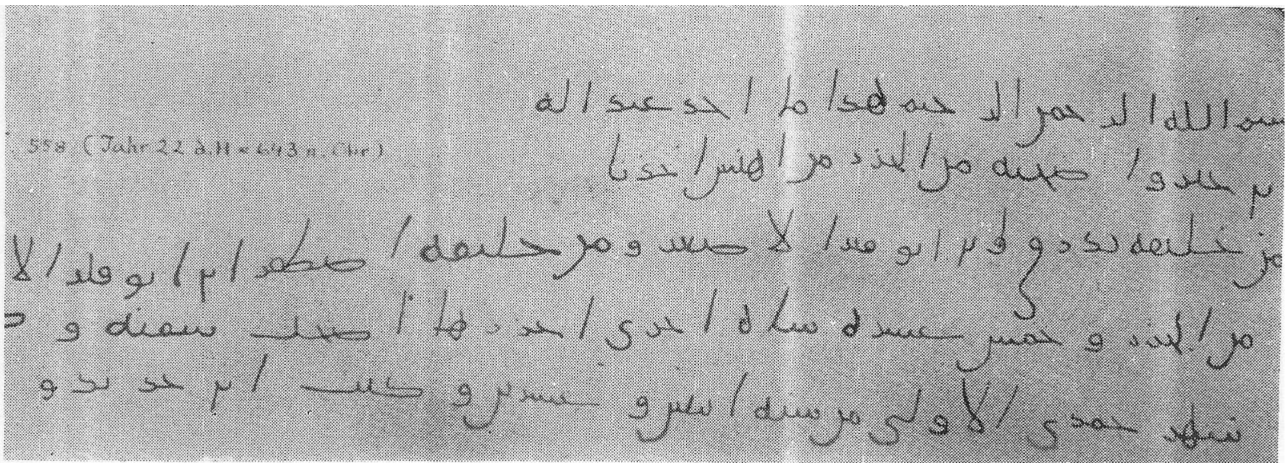
558 (Jahr 22 d.H = 643 n. Chr)

Figure 6. Papyrus, dated 22 H/643 CE. National Library, Vienna, Perf 558.

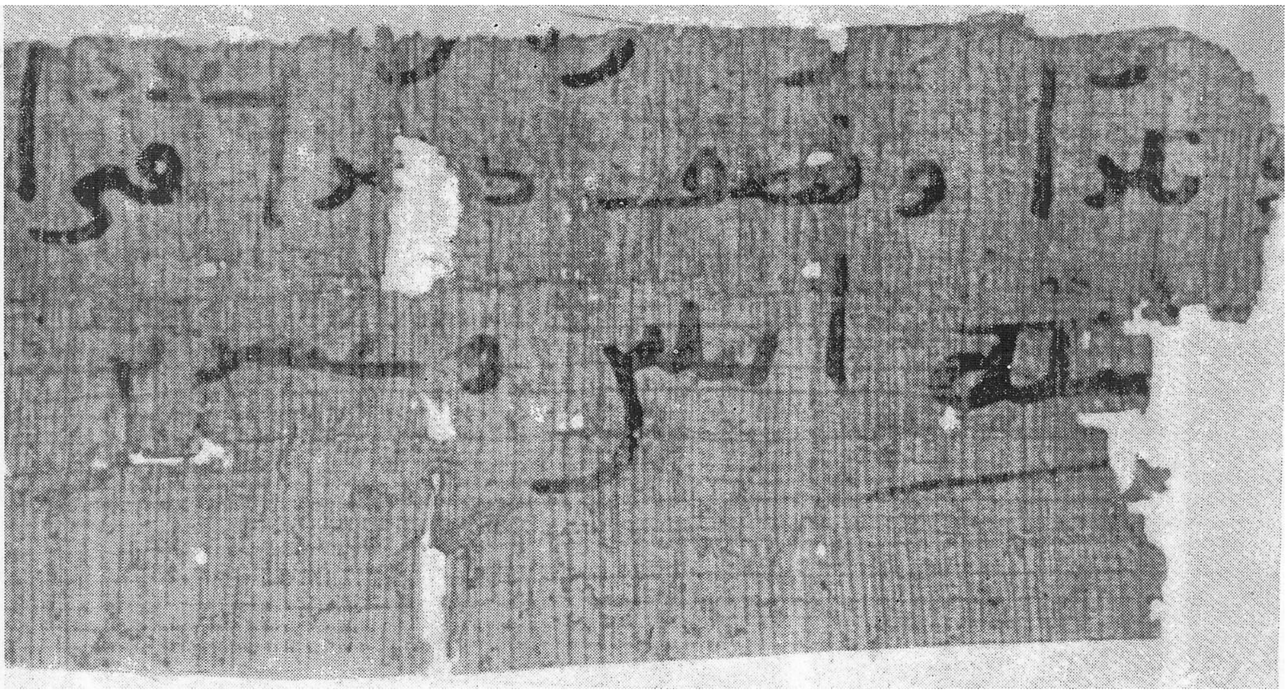

Figure 7. Papyrus, dated 22 H/643 CE. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, P.Berol.15002.

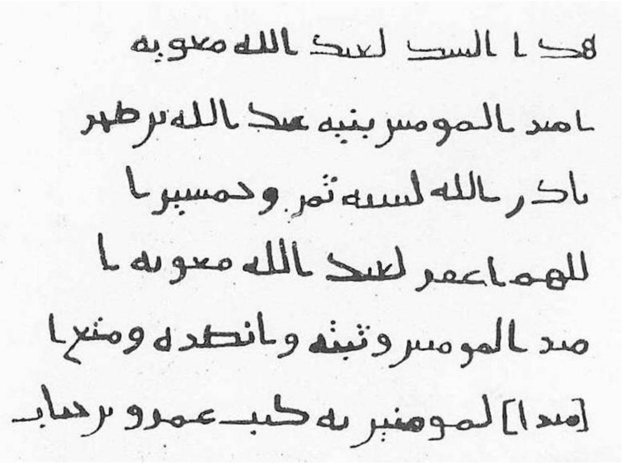

Figure 8. Rock-cut inscription dedicating a dam at Ta'if, Hijaz, dated 58 H/677–8 CE.

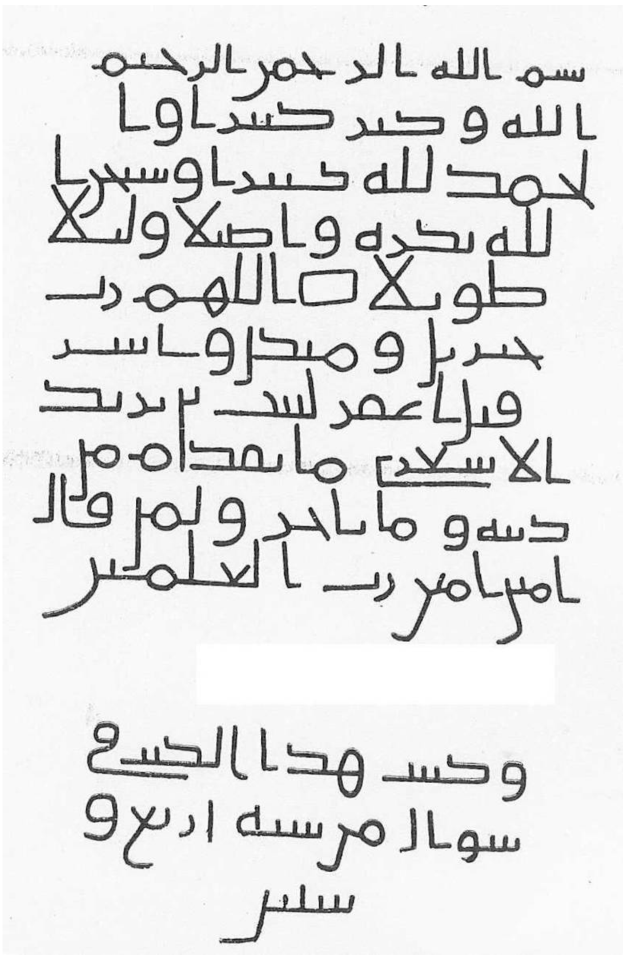

Figure 9. Rock-cut inscription in stone, Hafnat al-Abyad, near Karbala', Iraq, dated 64 H/683–4 CE.

a comprehensive analysis of the basic data of letter and word forms in the earliest scripts can offer, both in terms of generally illuminating what is a relatively under-researched and under-published topic, and more specifically in offering pointers towards the chronology and geography of early Arabic palaeography.

It is worth noting that the lettering on the written (rather than cut) materials in question (i.e. the Qur'ans and papyrus documents) does not constitute a formal, regulated calligraphic script, but rather represents the handwriting of individual scribes, in which the basic form of the letter is understood and known. Furthermore, the exact execution

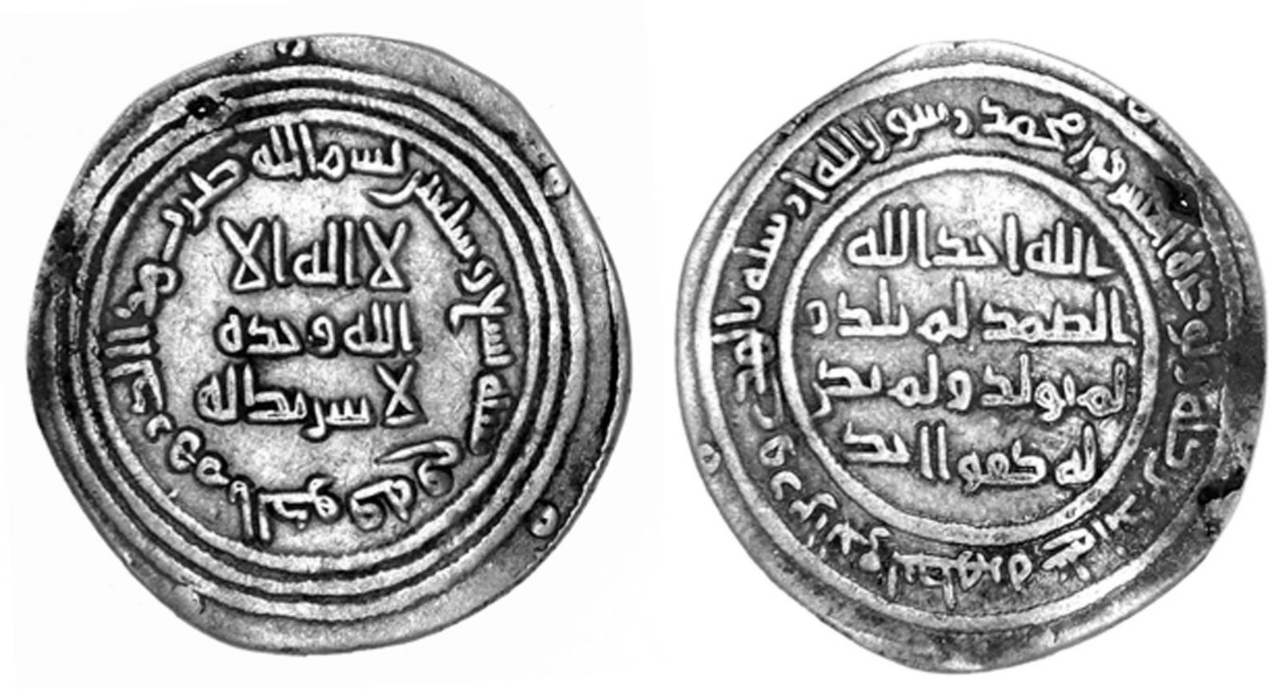

Figure 10. Silver dirham, al-Kufa, 79 H/698 CE. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Stephen Lloyd.

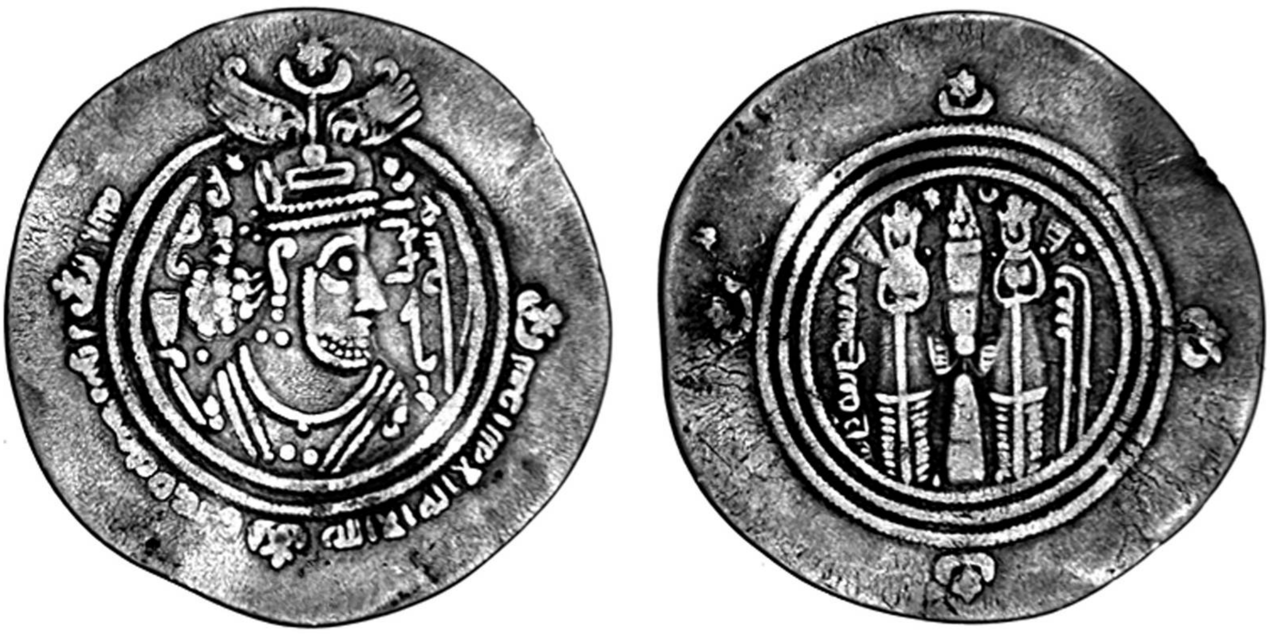

Figure 11. Silver dirham (drachm), in the name of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, Bishapur, 78 H/697 CE. Private Collection. Image courtesy of Stephen Lloyd.

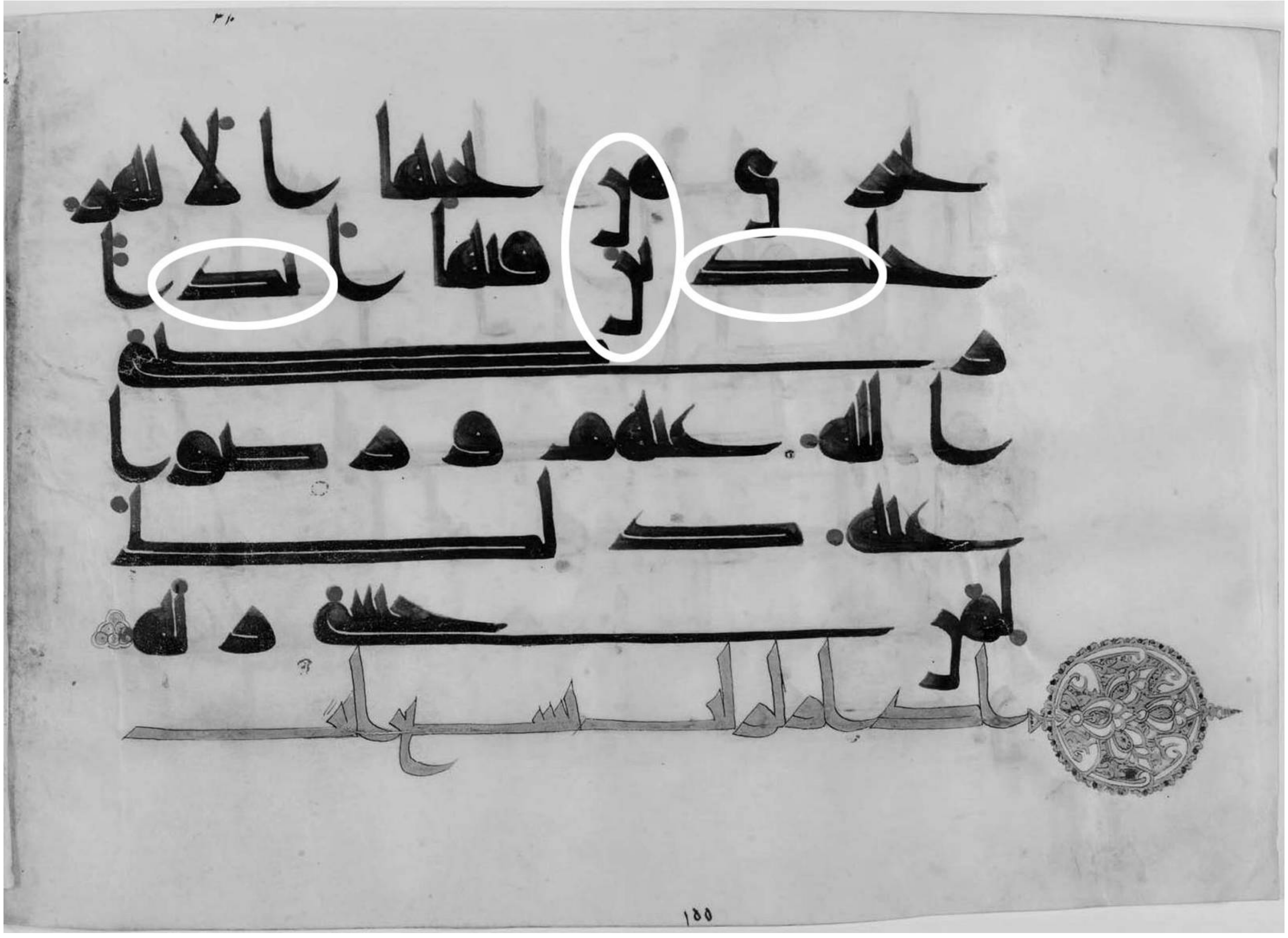

Figure 12. Mature Kufic script on a Qur'an folio of c. 850–900 CE showing regularity of letter-forms, e.g. dal and terminal nun. Private Collection. Photo: all rights reserved.

varies considerably from scribe to scribe, from document to document, from page to page, and even from line to line and word to word within the same page written by the same scribe. This is what distinguishes it as handwriting rather than a formal, regulated script, and this makes the material distinct from scripts such as Kufic, in which rules concerning the exact form of letters were adhered to by scribes copying Qur'anic manuscripts. In Kufic script the degree of horizontal stretching of each letter or ligature (*mashq*) could vary, but the essential form of the letter did not (see fig. 12). It should also be noted that more than one scribe often contributed to a single Qur'an codex in the early period, so that variations in exact execution of given letter-forms within a codex may be attributable to different hands. The Qur'an fragment Arabe 328 in the Bibliothèque nationale de France is an example of this phenomenon (see fig. 2).

There are certain Arabic letters and words that occur rather often in most of the epigraphic materials and Qur'anic manuscripts under discussion. This is due to the frequent occurrence of certain words within the Qur'an, and also within the legends on coins and in certain names. One of the most common is the letter-form for the terminal *qaf* (ق), which, for example, occurs as the final letter of the word *al-Haqq* (الحق 'the truth'). This word appears frequently in the Qur'an and in the marginal wording of Umayyad post-reform coins within the phrase *…bi'l-huda wa din al-haqq…* ('with guidance and the religion of truth'), as well as in the word *Dimashq* ('Damascus'), which appears on all pre-and post-reform coins of the Umayyad period struck at Damascus except the gold issues. In a previous paper, examples of the *qaf* found on papyrus, coins and stones of the first century Hijri were compared with those found in Qur'an manuscripts in Hijazi script, and were then arranged according to similarities in the physical form of the letters, with the sequence punctuated by dated examples from milestones, coins, papyri etc.[29] In that paper it was suggested that there was sufficient kinship among these letter-forms, and a close enough relationship in form to dated examples on other media, to strengthen significantly the argument that these scripts and the codices within which they are represented are indeed from the first century Hijri, and to indicate a rudimentary chronology.

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[29] Marcus Fraser, 'Calligraphy in Early Qur'an Manuscripts', delivered at *Ink and Gold*, a symposium on Islamic calligraphy held at the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, under the organisation of the Museum für Islamische Kunst. The publication is forthcoming under the title 'The Qur'an: Textual Beginnings and Aesthetic Receptions'.

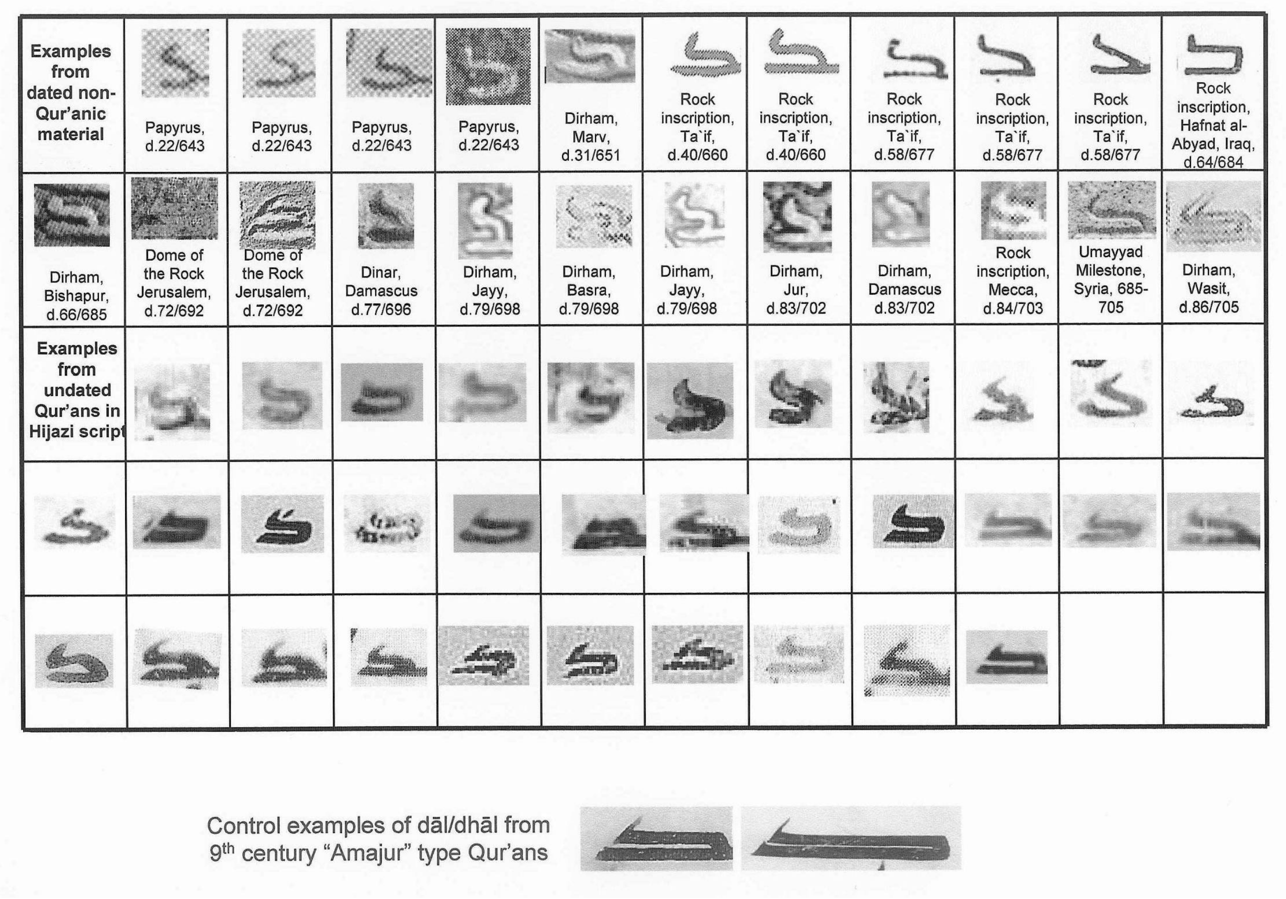
Examples from dated non-Qur'anic material
Papyrus, d.22/643
Papyrus, d.22/643
Papyrus, d.22/643
Papyrus, d.22/643
Dirham, Marv, d.31/651
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.40/660
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.40/660
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.58/677
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.58/677
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.58/677
Rock inscription, Hafnat al-Abyad, Iraq, d.64/684
Dirham, Bishapur, d.66/685
Dome of the Rock Jerusalem, d.72/692
Dome of the Rock Jerusalem, d.72/692
Dinar, Damascus d.77/696
Dirham, Jayy, d.79/698
Dirham, Basra, d.79/698
Dirham, Jayy, d.79/698
Dirham, Jur, d.83/702
Dirham, Damascus d.83/702
Rock inscription, Mecca, d.84/703
Umayyad Milestone, Syria, 685-705
Dirham, Wasit, d.86/705
Examples from undated Qur'ans in Hijazi script
Control examples of dāl/dhāl from 9th century "Amajur" type Qur'ans

Figure 13. Letter-forms of dal/dhal c. 22–86 H/642–705 CE.

In the present paper two other useful and visually diagnostic letter-forms will be examined. The first is the *dal/dhal* (د ذ). This appears in numerous words within the Qur'anic material and on works on papyrus and stone, deriving from roots such as *hamida* ('to praise') and '*abada* ('to serve, worship'), and present in words such as *aladhi/aladhina* (relative pronoun: 'those who', 'that which'), and those incorporating the word *dha* ('this'), such as *madha* ('what'), *li-madha* ('why'), *dhalika* ('that') and so forth. This letter-form also appears on several occasions in the legends of coins, both pre- and post-reform dirhams and dinars. On pre-reform dirhams the phrases *Muhammad Rasul Allah* ('Muhammad is the Messenger of God') and *Lillah al-hamdu* ('God be praised') occur frequently, providing multiple instances of the letter *dal*. On post-reform coins the *dal* appears in the words *dirham* and *dinar* themselves, and also in the central phrases *Allahu ahad, allahu al-samad, lam yalid wa lam yulad, wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad*' (the text of Surat al-Ikhlas [Qur'an 112], 'God is One, God is Eternal, He does not beget, nor is He begotten, there is none that is like unto Him') and *la ilaha illa Allah wahdahu la sharik lahu* ('There is no god but God alone, none is associated with Him').

Having isolated a number of examples of the relevant letter (fig. 13) it is possible to begin analysing similarities in the individual letter-forms, and, using those from firmly dated non-Qur'anic materials as controls, to attempt to arrange them in a visual order. By positioning each example adjacent to its most formally similar counterpart – and basing this arrangement on visual evidence alone and ignoring for the moment any attempt to arrange the letters chronologically – while including within the group the dated non-Qur'anic examples, a kind of chain sequence is formed: see figure 14, where non-Qur'anic dated examples have been labelled with their relevant dates, and Qur'anic examples are not labelled. The slight variations between each example in the chain lead to an evolution of forms from beginning to end. Several features are apparent from this visual arrangement. Firstly, there is a homogeneity that is not necessarily obvious at first glance, but is definitely present when the actual letter-forms are examined closely. Secondly, while each example is very close in form to its neighbours, the slight variations between examples and a gradual evolution of form leads to a situation where the example at the end of the chain is quite distinct in form from that of the first example. Thirdly, it is noticeable that there is no strong chronological pattern in the sequence, with the later dated examples from non-Qur'anic materials occurring both near the beginning and near the end of the chain. However, it is also observable that the earliest dated examples, those from the two papyrus documents dated

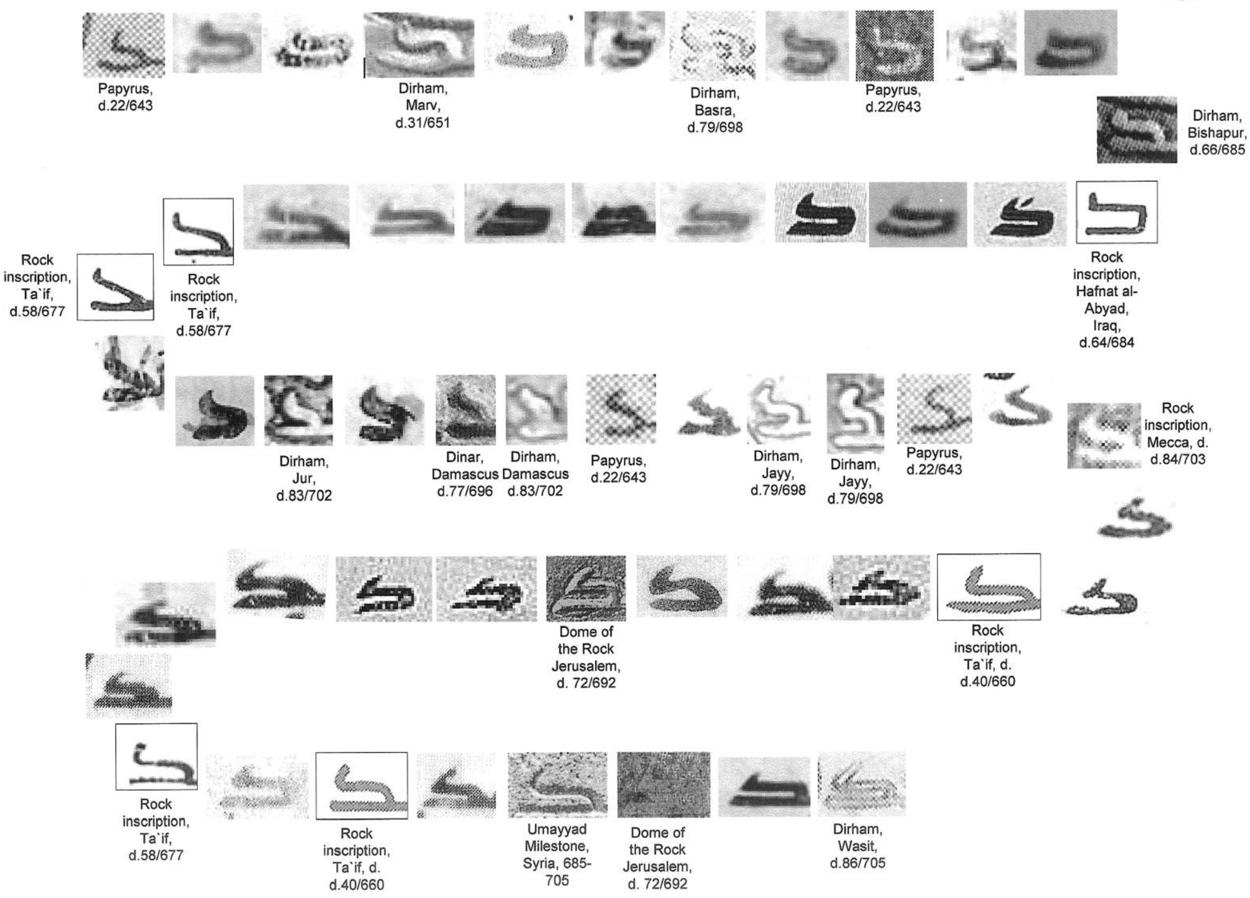
Papyrus, d.22/643
Dirham, Marv, d.31/651
Dirham, Basra, d.79/698
Papyrus, d.22/643
Dirham, Bishapur, d.66/685
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.58/677
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.58/677
Rock inscription, Hafnat al-Abyad, Iraq, d.64/684
Dirham, Jur, d.83/702
Dinar, Damascus d.77/696
Dirham, Damascus d.83/702
Papyrus, d.22/643
Dirham, Jayy, d.79/698
Dirham, Jayy, d.79/698
Papyrus, d.22/643
Rock inscription, Mecca, d. d.84/703
Dome of the Rock Jerusalem, d. 72/692
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d. d.40/660
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d.58/677
Rock inscription, Ta`if, d. d.40/660
Umayyad Milestone, Syria, 685-705
Dome of the Rock Jerusalem, d. 72/692
Dirham, Wasit, d.86/705

Figure 14. Letter-form of dal/dhal c. 22–82 H/642–705 CE.

22/642, all occur in the upper half of the chain, while the lower half of the chain is punctuated mostly (but not exclusively) by dated examples from 72–86/692–705. It is also noticeable that, starting from the top of the chain, the first example is the earliest and the last is the latest.

Is this enough to indicate a rudimentary chronology? Probably not, due in part to the relatively small number of examples in the chain. However, if similar results were found with a considerably larger study group of examples of the letter *dal/dhal,* then it might be possible to deduce more firmly a chronological sequence. What the chain and the overall grouping does show is that a general similarity exists amongst these specific examples of the letter-form *dal/dhal*, and that the non-dated Qur'anic examples can be closely linked visually and graphically to dated non-Qur'anic examples in every case. The general visual and graphic homogeneity amongst this group is an affirmation of the dating of this set of forms of the letter *dal/dhal* to the period 22–86/642–705. With further results of this type, drawn from the analysis of other letter-forms, it should be possible to assert the more general attribution of Hijazi scripts on these Qur'ans to the period up to c. 90/708.

The second letter-form to be examined in this paper is the terminal and independent *jim/ha/kha* (ج ح خ) (see fig. 15). It must be said that a slight limitation of the terminal *jim/ha/kha* letter-form lies in the fact that it does not occur on a very wide range of non-Qur'anic materials, nor over a wide enough timespan to permit a broad chronological range of examples from the first century Hijri. But we are fortunate at least to have a number of examples of silver dirhams bearing the name of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, governor of Iraq during the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705). All the examples of the terminal *jim* used in this comparison are from silver dirhams dated between 77 and 82 H (696–701 CE), and therefore give a chronological clustering of dated exemplars which is rather narrow. Nevertheless, even with this limitation, the visual comparisons are very interesting and, on a more limited scale, reflect the sort of findings that we saw with the *dal/dhal* and the *qaf*. See figure 16: again, non-Qur'anic dated examples are labelled with their relevant dates, while Qur'anic examples are unlabelled. Starting from the mid-left point of the circle, the letter-forms again fall into a visual sequence, in this case a gradual evolution of forms leading right round to the beginning again in a circular format. Thus the first form is very similar to the last, and vice-versa, so that you

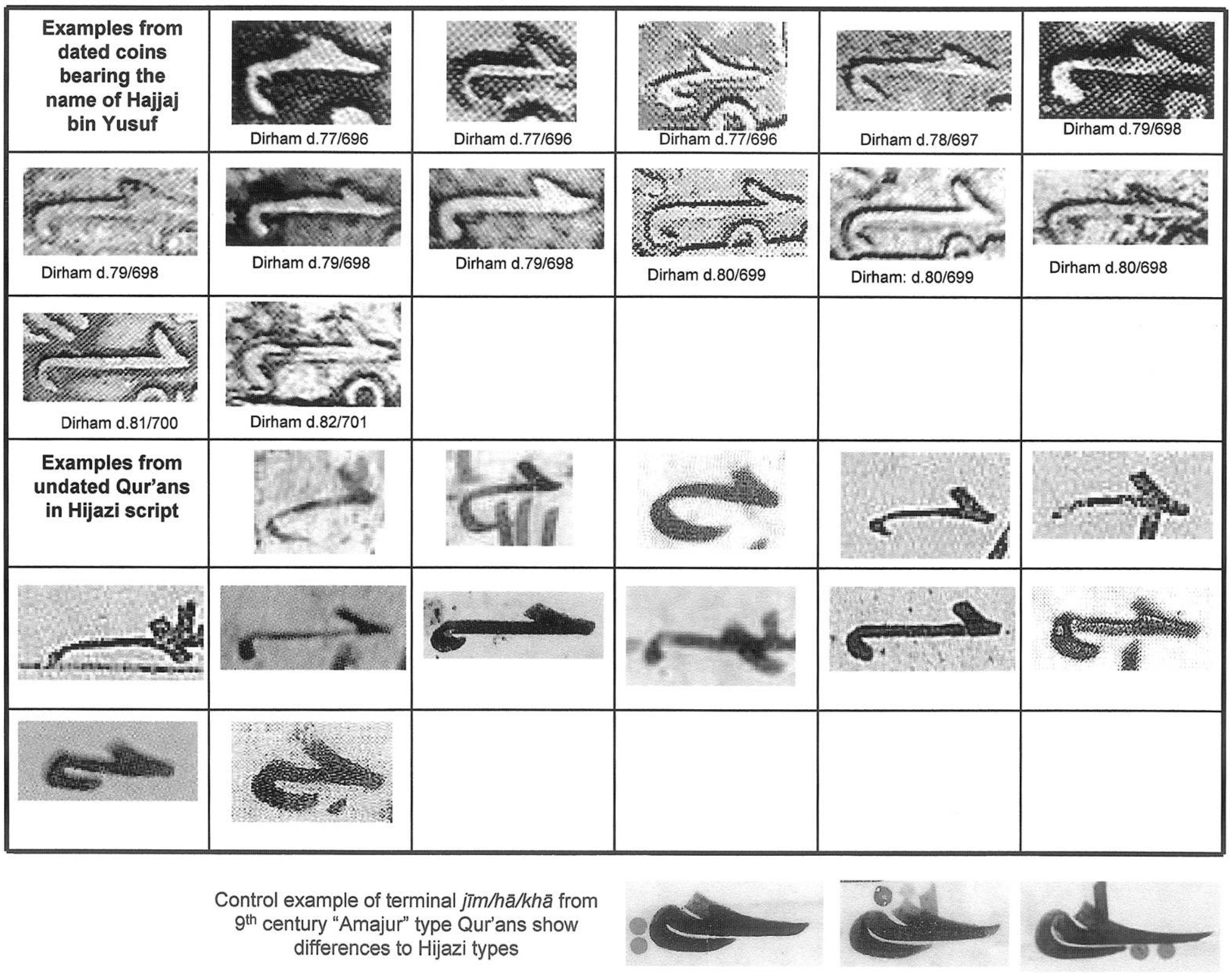
Examples from dated coins bearing the name of Hajjaj bin Yusuf
Dirham d.77/696
Dirham d.77/696
Dirham d.77/696
Dirham d.78/697
Dirham d.79/698
Dirham d.79/698
Dirham d.79/698
Dirham d.79/698
Dirham d.80/699
Dirham: d.80/699
Dirham d.80/698
Dirham d.81/700
Dirham d.82/701
Examples from undated Qur'ans in Hijazi script
Control example of terminal jīm/hā/khā from 9th century "Amajur" type Qur'ans show differences to Hijazi types

Figure 15. Letter-forms of the terminal jim/ha/kha on early undated Qur'an folios on parchment, and silver dirham coins bearing the name of Hajjaj bin Yusuf dated 77–82 H.

can go round the chain in either direction or indeed start from any point, but the exact forms at opposite sides of the circle are quite distinct. Not only is there no particular chronological sequence, but the date range is too narrow to be meaningful in this case. Notwithstanding this aspect, it is again possible at least to state as a firm observation that the forms of the terminal *jim/ha/kha* used on several of the Qur'an manuscripts written in Hijazi script on parchment are very similar indeed to those used on Umayyad silver dirhams from the region governed by the Umayyad governor Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (i.e. Iraq and parts of Iran) in the years 77–82/696–701. The early form of the *jim/ha/kha* is so distinctive that it is a very useful diagnostic example, and it would be desirable to locate further examples of this letter-form in Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic sources from the early period and to take the analysis further.

When comparing letter-forms in this way, it is important to employ a control aspect to the study: that is, to compare the letter-forms under discussion not just with similar examples, but also with others which are dissimilar, so as to separate the 'early' forms from later ones. For this purpose we can compare the letter-forms examined so far with those used in Kufic scripts of the mid-ninth century, the latter being of the type used in the earliest Qur'anic manuscripts that bear documentary dates within the actual codices themselves. There are several examples ranging in date from around 232/847 to the end of the ninth century CE and even into the early tenth,[30] among which is the well-known, so-called 'Amajur Qur'an',[31] written in a straightforward, mature, regular Kufic script across three lines per page. It was donated to a mosque in Tyre in the year 262/875–6 by the Abbasid governor of Syria. A visual comparison shows that the early forms of the letters *dal/dhal* and *jim/ha/kha* in the Hijazi-script Qur'ans and associated non-Qur'anic materials are distinctly different from those used on Qur'ans in mature Kufic scripts of the

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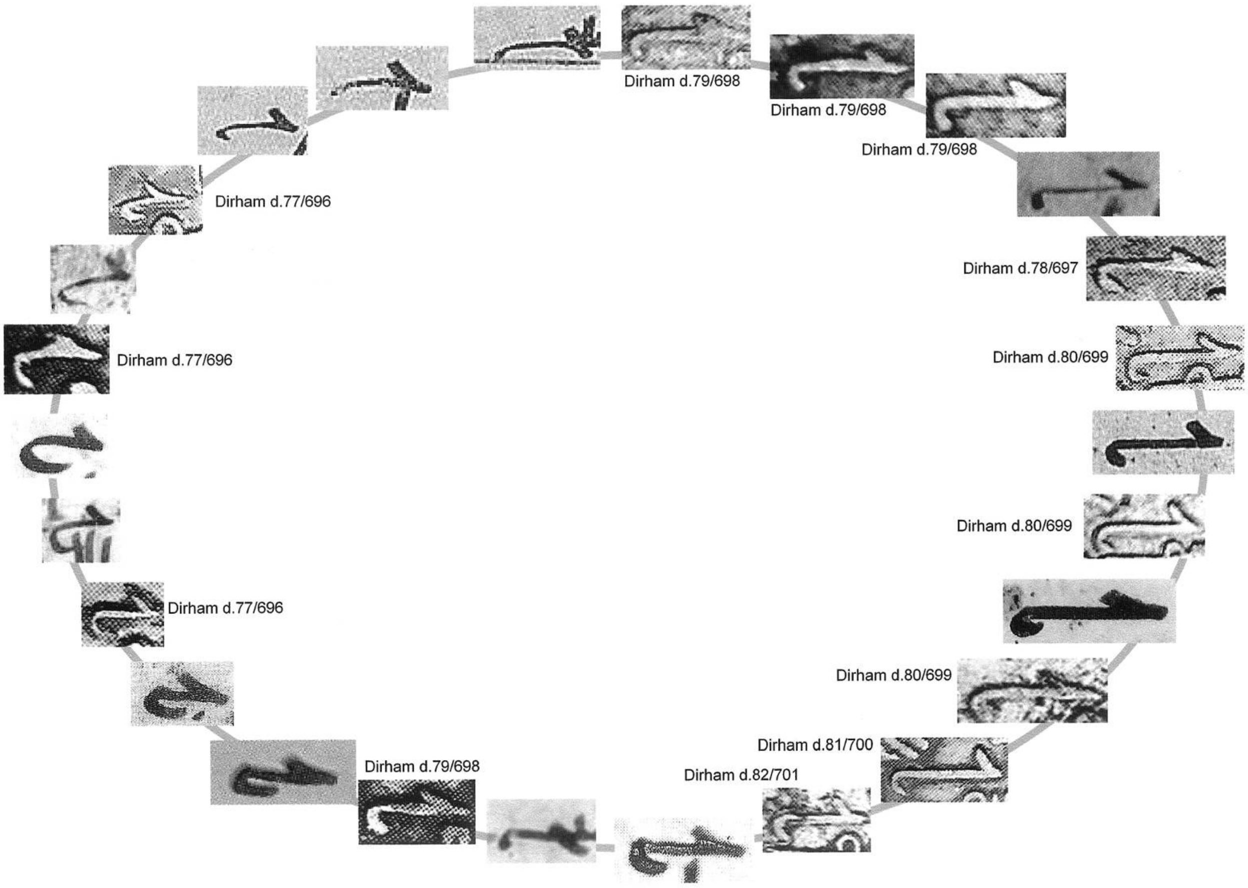
[30] See Déroche, *The 'Abbasid Tradition*, pp. 36–37, where the mature Kufic script in question is termed 'Abbasid group D'.

[31] This Qur'an is widely published. For a recent illustration clearly showing the letter-form *dal* see Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), fig. 118, p. 75.


Dirham d.79/698
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Dirham d.82/701
Dirham d.79/698
Dirham d.77/696
Dirham d.77/696
Dirham d.77/696

Figure 16. Letter-form jim/ha/kha c. 77–82 H/696–701 CE.

Amajur type of the mid-to-late ninth century, both in their lack of precise and angular form and in their variability, inconsistency and lack of repetitive regularity of form (see control examples on figs 13 and 15).

The analysis of these letter-forms, though based on a relatively small number of examples from both Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic sources, supports the proposal that studies such as this one can provide interesting and important information about the development of early Arabic scripts, and the author offers this brief study as the opening preliminary step towards a wider survey, which is intended to present a much larger body of evidence and will hopefully lead to firmer conclusions. The analysis of palaeographic evidence from early Qur'ans is an important aspect of research in this area, but, in the absence of colophons and other documentary evidence within the Qur'an manuscripts themselves, the palaeographic evidence should be seen as one of several avenues of research, including codicological, art-historical and textual approaches, that may ultimately shed new light on the earliest period of Islamic manuscript production and the development of Arabic script and calligraphy.

THE INFLUENCE OF ORAL NARRATING TRADITIONS ON A FREQUENTLY ILLUSTRATED THIRTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT

Filiz Adigüzel Toprak

This paper examines the relationship between the miniature paintings of a frequently illustrated text of thirteenth-century Iraq and Syria, the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri, and the oral narrating traditions of the Arab world. I intend to demonstrate a link between oral narrating traditions and the miniature paintings found in some of the illustrated copies of the *Maqamat*, along with some of the other remarkable illustrated manuscripts of the period. As has already been noted by Richard Ettinghausen, shadow plays of the period, which were presumably derived from oral narrative traditions, appear to have influenced the compositional settings and placement of the figures seen in these miniature paintings, which in turn recall a kind of theatrical setting.[1] The figures, placed on a colourless background with vertical and horizontal architectural separations, often seem to be performing a play in a theatre with their gestures and mimicry. Painters of the *Maqamat* could certainly be assumed to have experienced being a member of the audience at narrative plays, and thus the arrangement of the *Maqamat* paintings may well have been inspired by the stage settings and the bodily movements of those performances.

The *Maqamat* of al-Hariri

According to Oleg Bolshakov, illustrated manuscripts of Arabic literature have received less scholarly attention than their Persian counterparts as a result of various factors: their relatively brief history (a florescence that runs from the end of the twelfth to the middle of the fourteenth centuries), along with the relatively small number of surviving illustrated manuscripts, have mitigated against a large body of scholarship. Only a single work of Arab literature has survived in any significant number of illustrated manuscripts, and that is the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri.[2] As Oleg Grabar states, it has now been known for several decades that this was one of the few Arabic texts to have been frequently illustrated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and thirteen of the surviving manuscripts of this text are provided with miniature paintings.[3] However, David Storm Rice suggests that it is highly probable that the *Maqamat* manuscripts copied in al-Hariri's lifetime were not illustrated, because two autograph copies signed by al-Hariri (dated 513 H/1119 CE and 514/1120) have survived to this day, and neither of these have illustrations; therefore the miniature paintings seem to have become a common addition to the text only after the *Maqamat* had achieved great popularity.[4] Shirley Guthrie notes that al-Hariri's text was composed more than a hundred years before the earliest extant illustrated versions appeared.[5] Hundreds more unillustrated manuscripts remain from the thirteenth and later centuries. Nearly all of them were copied in the central lands of the Arabic-speaking world – the areas that are now Egypt, Syria and Iraq – where there lived the classes of educated Arabs likely to enjoy reading the text, and to be interested in acquiring, perhaps even in commissioning, a luxury edition of such a work.[6] According to Doris Behrens-Abouseif, the immense success of the *Maqamat* is indicative of a wider artistic disposition within medieval Arab society.[7] From another point of view, Ettinghausen suggests that the popularity of this widely appreciated work stemmed from the emphasis placed upon Arabic literature in this period, as well as the significant rise of wealthy merchants amongst urban societies during the thirteenth century, creating a new group of patrons for the luxury arts.[8]

There are three particularly well-known illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqamat*: these are the St Petersburg manuscript (c. 1225–1235) held in the Institute of Oriental Studies (ms. C-23);[9] the manuscript signed by the scribe al-Wasiti and dated 634 H/1237 CE, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (ms. arabe 5847);[10] and the Istanbul manuscript (c. 1242–1258) in the Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2916.[11] The paintings from these three manuscripts exemplify the most common characteristics of the *Maqamat* miniatures: the expression of feeling through gesture, a colourless background behind the architectural framework of the image, and a manner of scene-setting that places great emphasis on certain individual elements and overall functions rather like a stage backdrop. These characteristics perhaps illuminate the basic sources for the style and imagery of this formative period of Islamic painting, which also owes much to the arts of the pre-Islamic Sasanian territories, as well as Mediterranean Byzantium, both of which had been largely conquered by the Arabs in the early Islamic expansion.[12]

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[1] Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (Washington: Rizzoli, 1977), pp. 81–82.

[2] Oleg G. Bolshakov, 'The St. Petersburg Manuscript of the Maqamat by al-Hariri and its Place in the History of Arab Painting', *Manuscripta Orientalia*, 3/4 (December 1997), p. 59.

[3] Oleg Grabar, 'A Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript of the Maqamat of Hariri', *Ars Orientalis*, 5 (1963), p. 97.

[4] David Storm Rice, 'The Oldest Illustrated Arabic Manuscript', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXII (1959), p. 214.

[5] Shirley Guthrie, *Arab Social Life in The Middle Ages* (London: Saqi, 1995), p. 18.

[6] Oleg Grabar, *Maqamat al-Hariri illustrated by al-Wasiti* (London: Touchart, 2003), p. 38.

[7] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 1999), p. 95.

[8] Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 81.

[9] *Ibid*., pp. 104–105. See also Bolshakov, 'The St. Petersburg Manuscript', pp. 59–60.

[10] As Grabar has observed, this manuscript, copied and illustrated by Yahya ibn Mahmud ibn Yahya ibn Abi al-Hasan ibn Kuwwarih al-Wasiti, is perhaps the greatest of all the illustrated copies of the *Maqamat*, because of the quality and variety of its illustrations (Grabar, *Maqamat al-Hariri,* p. 38).

[11] Grabar, 'Newly Discovered Illustrated Manuscript', p. 93. See also Rice, 'Oldest Illustrated Arabic Manuscript', pp. 207–220.

The *Maqama* Tradition and the *Maqamat*

The name *Maqamat* is the plural of the Arabic word *maqama* (usually translated as 'assembly' or 'session'), a complex form of composition in which classical Arabic literary prose is generally agreed to have reached its apogee.[13] The *Maqamat* as a literary genre appears to have been invented by Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani (969–1008), a fluent writer of both Persian and Arabic poetry and prose; after al-Hamadhani, the most famous classical writer of *maqamat* was Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri (1054–1122).[14] According to Deborah Folaron, the various genres of narrative that had developed within Arabic prose traditions began to overlap as early as the seventh century, and of these genres the *maqama* acquired a particularly distinctive performative aspect in popular storytelling, as its oral transmission was frequently accompanied by imitation, music and impersonation.[15] As Jacob Landau notes, in the *maqama* tradition the performance of the long narrative poem placed a strong emphasis on mimicry, 'in which the theme was frequently presented in the guise of conversation, parts of which imitated various characters'.[16] Traditionally, the *hakawati* (story-teller) or *rawi* (reciter) presented his narrative in the form of storytelling, yet adapted himself to different roles in order to render his characters as flesh and blood.

Folaron and Landau both highlight the relationship that the *maqama*, as a literary genre, maintained with theatrical performances. In a reflection of this relationship, Mohamed Al-Khozai claims that the medieval Arabic shadow theatre, which is of course another form of theatrical performance, was permeated by traces of the *maqama* genre that was so prominent among urban Arab cultures in the thirteenth century.[17]

The *Maqamat* of al-Hariri displays an elaborate literary style, but its narrative movement from one setting to another enables the reader to enjoy the lively ambience refracted through the miniature paintings. Al-Hariri sets his story around the cynical urban anti-hero Abu Zayd, who makes his living through begging and swindling, using wit and rhetoric to this end.[18] Guthrie claims that Abu Zayd displays a completely anti-heroic character; however, al-Hariri himself was insistent that his work had an underlying moral purpose inasmuch as Abu Zayd, who was for much of his life an unprincipled and disreputable rogue, ultimately died as a good Muslim, having repented of his wicked ways.[19] Even prior to Abu Zayd's repentance, al-Hariri allusively supplies moral and didactic messages through a 'hero' who is the opposite, in both image and nature, of Abu Zayd. The narrator of al-Hariri's text is al-Harith, who is a merchant recounting his experiences of his travels. According to Guthrie al-Hariri based the narrator, al-Harith, on himself – an entirely plausible reading.[20]

As a literary genre the *Maqamat* carries within it several features of the oral narrating traditions of the medieval Arab world, from which it undoubtedly gained its content. In Folaron's view, *maqamat* may have been plays written for theatrical performance, composed as 'dramatic literature' with didactic purposes.[21] It could well be argued that the involvement of oral narrating traditions within the make-up of al-Hariri's *Maqamat* may have influenced the compositional settings of the miniature paintings. It is, as has already been mentioned, a common scholarly assumption that the settings of the *Maqamat* illustrations are derived from the theatrical performances, such as shadow plays, of the period.[22] Thus, those settings act as a reference to the tradition of oral narrating as an act of performance. As Folaron has stated:

> The oral tradition within the Arab world is one of a collective imagination. Tales and stories have traditionally had twofold purposes: on the one hand, they provide entertainment to an audience so long accustomed to orality that they have developed a particular taste for, and an appreciation of, verbal imagery. On the other hand, tales respond to a variety of needs – cultural, social, religious, and so forth – that emerge constantly from the individual's interaction with his surroundings, as well as from the influence of society on the individual.[23]

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[12] Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), pp. 129–131.

[13] Carl Brockelman, 'Makama', in Clifford Edmund Bosworth *et al.* (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. VI (Leiden: Brill, 1986), p. 107.

[14] Fedwa Malti-Douglas, 'Maqamat and Adab: "Al-Maqama al-Madiriyya" of al-Hamadhani', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 105/2, (1985), p. 247.

[15] Deborah Folaron, 'Oral Narrating and Performing Traditions in The History of Modern Middle Eastern and Maghrebian Theatre and Drama', *Nitle Arab World Project: Arab Culture and Civilization*, p. 7. Dal Website © 2002–04 National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education [accessed 1 June 2009], http://www.teatroestoria.it/Docs/ Links/Anto/FOL-2002-01.htm.

[16] Jacob M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), p. 2.

[17] Mohamed A. Al-Khozai, *The Development of Early Arabic Drama 1847–1900* (London/New York: Longman, 1984), pp. 19–20.

[18] Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty*, pp. 159–164.

[19] Guthrie, *Arab Social Life,* p. 20.

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 19.

[21] Folaron, 'Oral Narrating', p. 8.

[22] Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, pp. 81–82; Khalid Amine, 'Theatre in the Arab World: A Difficult Birth', *Theatre Research International*, 31/2 (2006), p. 150.

[23] Folaron, 'Oral Narrating', pp. 1–2.

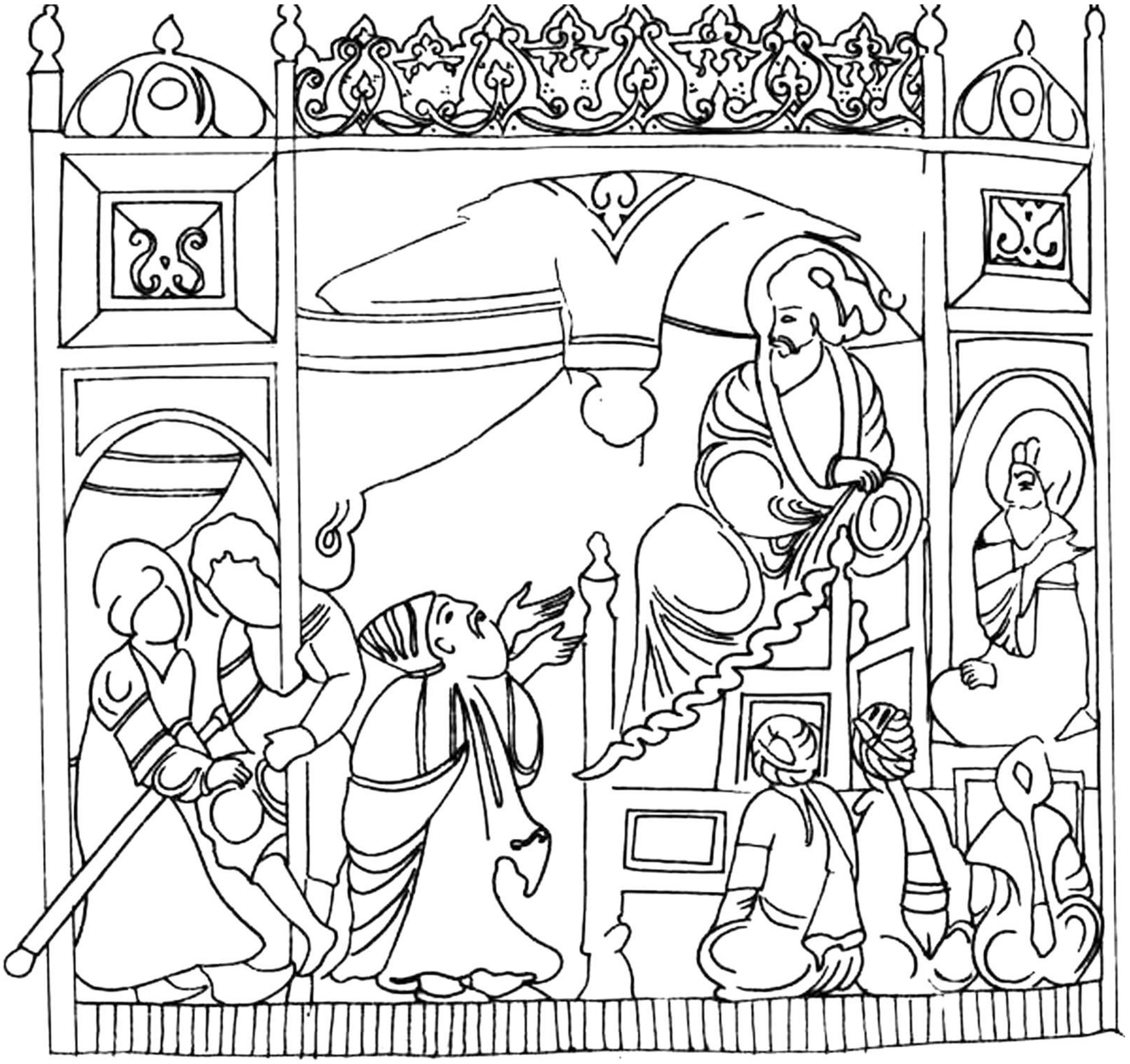

Figure 1. Maqamat *of al-Hariri: Abu Zayd before the governor of Merv (thirty-eighth maqama). Baghdad, c. 1225–1235. Ms. S.23, Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg. All drawings by the author.*

Folaron goes on to cite the oral narrative traditions of the Islamic world alongside song, dance and ritual, arguing that all of these constitute performative articulations of a 'collective social identity'. The narrator of the oral text performed this function in dialogue with an audience, using 'imitation, mimicry and impersonation, in order to create a kind of verbal imagery'. The role of the spectator at such a performance was an active one, with the oral narrator creating a 'fictional or theatrical space in which the audience was invited to interact with the story and with each other', drawing upon a common language of culturally encoded words and gestures to create a dialogue between audience and narrator as if they were 'all part of a theatrical performance'.[24]

Miniature Painting and Oral Narratives

A significant miniature of the St Petersburg manuscript, illustrating the thirty-eighth *maqama*, shows Abu Zayd appealing to the generosity of the Governor of Merv (fig. 1). This scene gives various triggers that serve to animate an imaginary scene of oral narration in the viewer's mind. First of all, in order to discuss such an image, one must analyse the placement of the figures within the composition. Four figures at the right form part of the assembly, all of them attentively witnessing the proceedings. According to Ettinghausen, 'among them is al-Harith, the narrator, probably the figure behind the Governor'.[25] On the left, there are two figures who appear to be irrelevant to the

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[24] *Ibid*.

[25] Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 105.

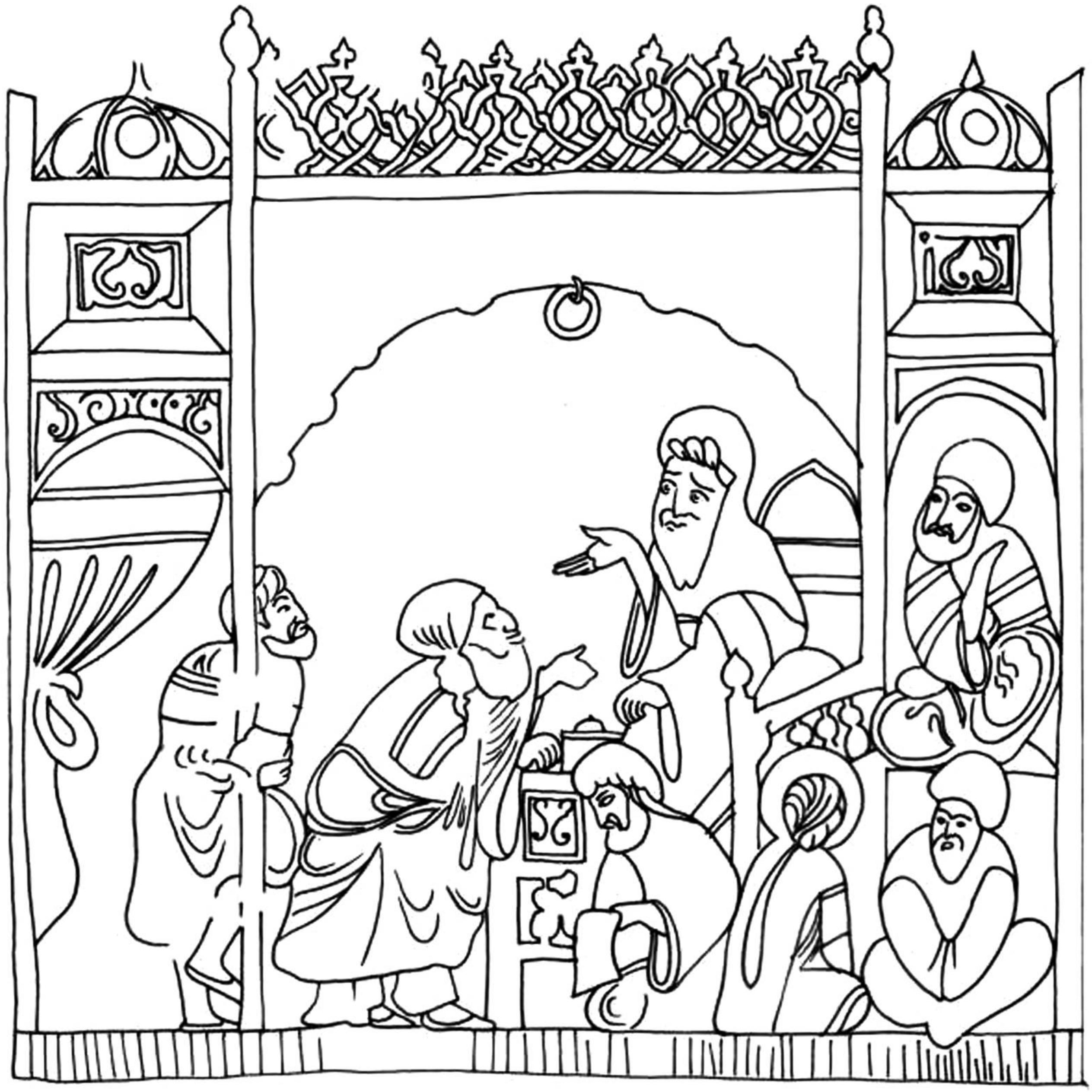

Figure 2. Maqamat *of al-Hariri: Abu Zayd before the qadi of Sa'da in Yemen (thirty-seventh maqama). Baghdad, c. 1225–1235. Ms. S.250, Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg.*

main theme of the scene: these figures seem to disregard the proceedings and instead talk to each other. Even without elaborate descriptions of the architectural setting, which in its flatly frontal division of space resembles the stage for a shadow play, this scene clearly bolsters the suggestion that some of the *Maqamat* illustrations transmit the clear sense that an act of oral narration is taking place. It is possible to trace two simultaneous directions of oral transmission in this scene through a close look at the placement of the figures. While Abu Zayd makes his speech to the Governor in the 'centre stage', the narrator al-Harith is on the right, fitted into a niche that rather separates him from the proceedings, and the three figures sitting at bottom right can be understood as his audience, ready to participate in whatever is happening. I would suggest that, regardless of what is taking place between Abu Zayd, the Governor and the other two figures on the left, the painter of this scene has constructed a further image of narration – almost a meta-narrative – that takes place between al-Harith in his niche on the right and the three figures, irrelevant to the main action of the scene, who sit before him. Therefore, we may speak of an act of oral narration in which the narrator is knowingly creating a theatrical space and the audience is invited to interact. Or, to define this more clearly, this could be described as incorporating the image of the oral narration of the text itself within what is ostensibly a narrative scene: the act of relation is thus integrated into the image of the events that are being related.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in the illustration for the immediately preceding *maqama* (i.e. the thirty-seventh) of the same manuscript (fig. 2). According to Ettinghausen, the mood is different from that of the thirty-eighth *maqama* discussed above. In the illustration of the thirty-seventh *maqama* Abu Zayd is, to quote Ettinghausen, 'addressing a cadi who is immediately sympathetic to his complaint',[26] whereas the same author describes the illustration of the thirty-eighth *maqama* as one in which Abu Zayd 'is eagerly pleading his case and gives emphasis to his speech … Yet in spite of the eloquent appeal, the face of the Governor expresses disdain'.[27] While the mood may differ, the illustrations from the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth *maqamat* of the St Petersburg manuscript represent a very closely related pair of variations on a single composition: the architectural setting is almost identical, the figures are placed in the same positions within the architecture, and once again, the composition presents two simultaneous acts of oral narration, one representing the direct exchange between Abu Zayd and the qadi that forms part of the narrative structure of the episode, the other the relation of the narrative itself by a narrator who speaks to an audience.

In such contexts the audience is the 'producer' of the interactive transaction between the audience and the narrator. It is therefore important for the narrator to entertain the audience properly. The narrator must gain the necessary attention from the audience in order to provide the interaction that eventually creates the theatrical performance itself. This depends on the ability and skill of the narrator to entertain and to receive attention, which he achieves through all manner of physical gestures; we can relate this effort on the part of the narrator to many scenes from the *Maqamat* manuscripts that exhibit clear gestures and a distinct form of body language.[28] In the forty-third *maqama* of the Paris *Maqamat* (Arabe 5847) one can easily recognise the gestures of each figure, though the composition is not fitted into quite such a static ready-made architectural setting, and no longer transmits so clearly the sense of a shadow play (fig. 3). From another point of view, Grabar notes that it is possible to imagine al-Wasiti, the painter and calligrapher of Arabe 5847, walking around his city making sketches of the people he sees or, perhaps more likely, storing in his memory hundreds of images of daily life.[29] Yet we could equally suggest that al-Wasiti, while illustrating the text, might in this particular painting have tried to follow in the path of an oral narrator; both the miniature painter and the oral narrator have endeavoured to create a theatrical performance. For the narrator, this would be done live via the act of performance; the painter meanwhile, creates his theatrical performance visually in two dimensions on a piece of paper.

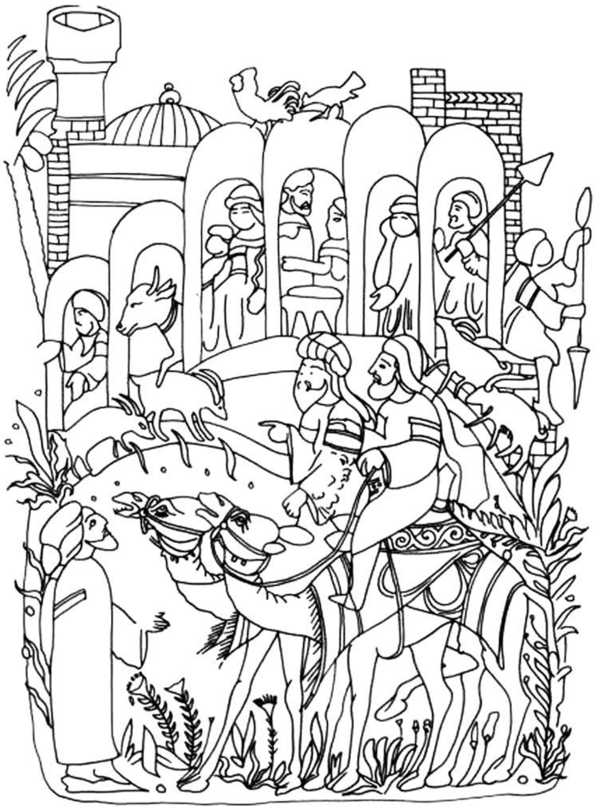

Figure 3. Maqamat *of al-Hariri: discussion near a village (forty-third maqama). Baghdad, dated 1237, painted by al-Wasiti. Ms. Arabe 5847, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.*

Cultural Background of the *Maqamat* Illustrations

In order to explain briefly the urban context and social attitudes of the period, one must look to the position of the arts within the society of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Arab world. As an indicator of the social and economic aspects of a given community, the artistic products of early Arab traditions are important to our understanding of the popularity of the *Maqamat*. The ninth to thirteenth centuries were a time of intellectual awakening for the Islamic world, and especially in the early part of this period translations were made from Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac and Greek into Arabic.[30] In addition to this burgeoning of literary culture Islamic visual arts, as represented in the production of luxury objects for the urban elite and the bourgeoisie, were also in the ascendant.[31] Luxury in the courtly context meant power; for the urban bourgeoisie it served as a source of pleasure and represented social prestige. As regards city culture, the proper practice of religion has at various times been connected (whether fairly or not) with the urban environment, underscoring a popular Muslim view of the good human being as a member of a community. Additionally, the ruling classes had to reside in the city in order to gain the approbation of the religious authorities, as well as to maintain an income from trade and industry.[32] This very general picture of how medieval Arab social life drew its urban context from religious and political circumstances nonetheless suggests that there was indeed a relation between artistic production and the 'urban' character which that art is so often said to possess.

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[28] Folaron, 'Oral Narrating', p. 3.
[29] Grabar, *Maqamat al-Hariri,* p. 44.
[30] Güner Inal, *Turk Minyatur Sanati-Baslangicindan Osmanlilara Kadar* (Ankara: A.K.M.Yay, 1995), pp. 17–18.
[31] Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty*, p. 159.

During the period of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, urban culture was apparently heavily impacted by the rise of the wealthy merchant classes in the Arab world; outside of the courts, wealthy merchants must have been the buyers of artistic products. In her book *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, Behrens-Abouseif discusses the *Arabian Nights* as a literary document of the early Arab world: that famous text includes stories about wealthy cosmopolitan merchants who dealt in goods from all over the world in order to satisfy a sophisticated clientele.[33] Parallel to this, a growing popular culture became increasingly significant and there developed a tendency towards combining sophisticated eloquence with older traditions of oral narration. Other popular and common artistic expressions include Shi'i passion plays and shadow plays.[34] According to Khalid Amine, the Shi'i ritual passion plays known as the *Ta'ziya* ('Condolence') are one example among many, and are perhaps the most tragic form of all the Islamic performance traditions. The passion play is a formulaic event commemorating the historical martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammed, and his family.[35]

Shadow plays were widely performed during the medieval period in the Islamic world. Muhammed ibn Danyal (1248–1311) is the name most often associated with this tradition. According to the scholar Metin And, the most important evidence for shadow plays in the medieval Arab world are the three shadow play texts written by Muhammed ibn Danyal around 1260–1277; moreover, And claims that the texts were written for theatrical performances.[36] Shadow plays were performed with figures held by sticks against a back-lit canvas screen. The audience sitting in front of the screen saw only the shadows of the figures, while the man who moved the figures spoke or sang the text just as though the moving figures were speaking or singing.[37] Such performances traditionally take place in a fully arranged theatrical space, in which a screen separates stage and auditorium. According to Amine, the shadow play was the only tradition of performance in the medieval Arab world that relied upon a written script.[38] This leads us back to Folaron's suggestion that *maqamat* may have been written for theatrical performances,[39] which might in turn support Amine's argument that shadow plays were dependent on a written script.

Another point of inquiry is centred around the term *adab*, as it relates to Arabic literature: this concept can illuminate links between literary and social contexts of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Arab world. According to Behrens-Abouseif, while the word *adab* has come to mean 'literature' in modern Arabic, it originally referred to 'a specific type of culture or lifestyle', and could be expressed in various aspects of Arab non-religious traditions:

> It was light, pleasing, humorous, rational, cosmopolitan and enlightened. It consisted of a variety of subjects and had to be interesting and not tiring, witty and erudite but not too scholarly … Excessive aestheticism and the prevailing elitism of the Abbasid period may explain the growth of an interest in the vernacular and even in the underworldly as a reaction … The *Maqama* genre arose in an atmosphere of declining sophistication.[40]

The credibility of an anti-hero cast in the mould of Abu Zayd during this period seems reasonable when set against such a backdrop, and exemplifies a change of spirit. Al-Hariri frequently used his tales as a subtle and indirect way of satirising the prevailing social order and drawing out a moral, and it is likely that they in some way gave a sophisticated voice to the urban bourgeoisie: in this may lie one reason for their considerable appeal throughout the Arab world.[41] As has already been discussed, another reason for the great popularity of the miniatures of the *Maqamat* could be the sudden surge in the popular dramatic arts of the period, as seen in puppet theatre and shadow plays. The type of performance taking place in such plays is evoked in the action shown in the *Maqamat* miniatures. Furthermore, the relationship between the shadow play and the illustrations of the *Maqamat*, with their individual elements and plain backgrounds, is underscored when one remembers that the shadow plays were performed through multicoloured flat images held against a white screen.[42]

Related Paintings in Other Manuscripts

Thus, changes in intellectual tastes that were accompanied by increased demand among urban societies for literature, theatrical performances and illustrated manuscripts took place between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries. There are two types of manuscript in particular that reveal a wealth of influences derived from different sources during this period. One of these is the considerable body of Greek medical and scientific texts that were translated into Arabic; the other is the literary text, a category including novels, prose, history and poetry. As these two types of text present quite different subjects, so they found expression in different modes of illustration. Scientific texts, such as the manuscript of the *Kitab al-baytara* dated 605/1209 (an Arabic version of a Greek treatise on hippiatrics and one of the earliest manuscripts identified with the Baghdad school), the various Arabic versions of the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides, and al-Jazari's *Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya* ('Book of knowledge of ingenious mechanical devices'), all had to be descriptive in their pictorial language.[43] In some cases, the illustrator could achieve greater clarity and immediacy than could the author of the explanatory text. For instance, the famous miniature painting of the 'elephant clock' from the 1315 manuscript of al-Jazari's text (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), shows how the device works, or at any rate what the artist believed it would look like, whilst also conveying a particular style through its painterly idiom (fig. 4).

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[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 159–164.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[34] Al-Khozai, *Early Arabic Drama*, p. 28.

[35] In the year 680 Husayn led his family and followers from Medina to Kufa at the request of the Muslims there. He was intercepted outside the city on the plains of Karbala' by Yazid, the governor of the region and the son of the first Umayyad Caliph. Yazid's army slaughtered Husayn and his followers after a siege that lasted for ten days. Abandoned by the Muslims of Kufa, Husayn died. Since then Husayn has become the greatest martyr in history for the Shi'is (Amine, 'Theatre in the Arab World', p. 148).

[36] Metin And, *Dünyada ve Bizde Gölge Oyunu* (Ankara: T. Iş Bank Yay, 1977), pp. 222–223. See also *idem*, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969), pp. 111–116.

[37] Paul Kahle (ed.), *Three Shadow Plays by Muhammad Ibn Daniyal* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial, 1992), p. 4.

[38] Amine, 'Theatre in the Arab World', pp. 148–150.

[39] Folaron, 'Oral Narrating', p. 8.

[40] Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty*, pp. 89–94.

[41] Guthrie, *Arab Social Life*, pp. 15–16.

[42] Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 81.

On the other hand, literary texts such as the *Maqamat*, with its ingenuity of eloquence, sometimes offer little direct material to the illustrator who is expected to create a scene that illustrates the events of the text. Since the illustrator is not necessarily interested in these verbal tours-de-force, the illustrators of the *Maqamat* looked instead to the social milieu. The lively and colourful illustrations produced in thirteenth-century Baghdad depict a variety of scenes from urban life in a style that conveys the jesting and caricatured nature of the textual episodes. In their close social observation these miniatures reveal many features of medieval Arab life, and may also be accepted as the expression of a sophisticated taste for art and literature among the medieval Arabic-speaking urban bourgeoisie.

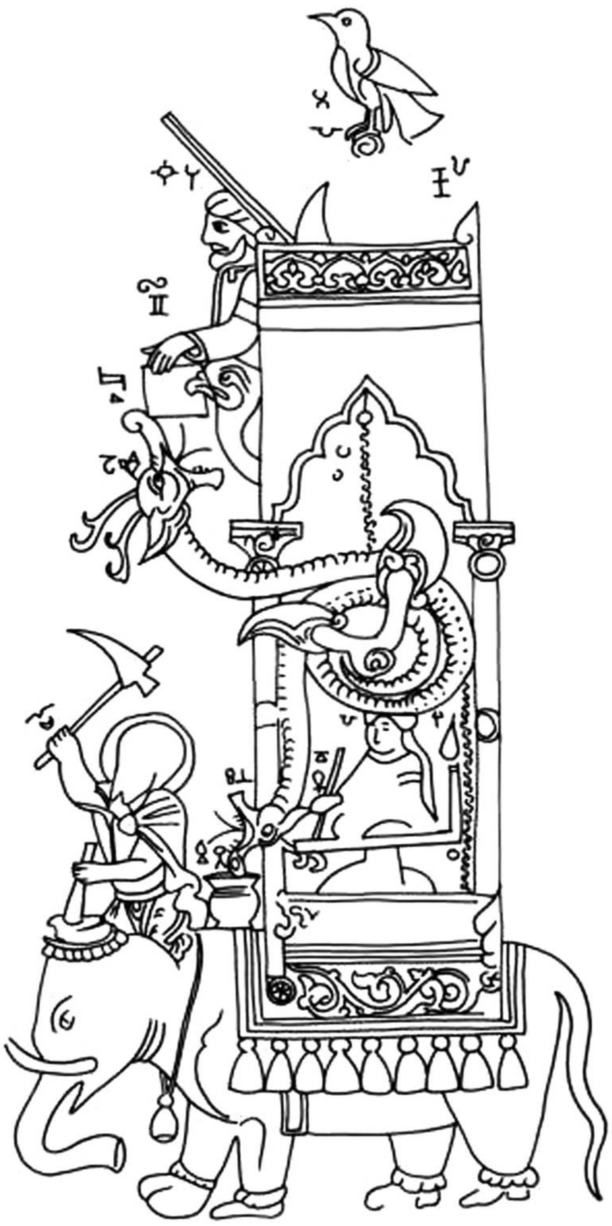

*Figure 4. Book of knowledge of ingenious mechanical devices (*Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya*) of al-Jazari; the 'elephant clock'. Probably Syria, 1315. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

There are two further pairs of miniatures from different manuscripts that may be called upon as evidence for the suggestion that non-*Maqamat* miniatures were also influenced by oral narrating traditions as acts of performance. The first one is the 'pharmacy' scene from the 1224 *De Materia Medica*, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; this is a general depiction of how to produce medicinal concoctions (fig. 5). If we turn to the compositional setting of the scene, it is apparent that the flatness, the architectural framework and the strong silhouettes of the figures all recall the stage setting of a shadow play, very similar to the scene of Abu Zayd before the qadi of Sa'da in Yemen (from the thirty-seventh *maqama*) in the St Petersburg manuscript of the *Maqamat* (fig. 2). The settings of these two compositions show striking similarities: in each, the picture surface is divided vertically, creating niches on both sides, and some of the figures are fitted into these niches, providing a counterbalance for the principal focus of the scene which takes place in the central space. Likewise, both sets of figures employ expressive gestures, and certain decorative devices, such as the knotted curtains, are found in both examples. Thus, both scenes recall an act of oral narration, perhaps a shadow play specifically. We may assume that the illustrator had been influenced by performances of that type – which he presumably would have witnessed as a member of the audience – and then subsequently created a rather closely drawn depiction from the image he retained of the narrated shadow performance.

The second pair of miniatures that may again help us to observe the influence of oral narrating techniques are from the thirteenth-century *Hadith Bayad wa Riyad* in the

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[43] Hugo Buchtal, 'Early Islamic Miniatures from Baghdad', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 5 (1942), pp. 9–39; David Talbot Rice, *Islamic Painting: A Survey* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), pp. 53–54; Bolshakov, 'The St. Petersburg Manuscript', p. 59.

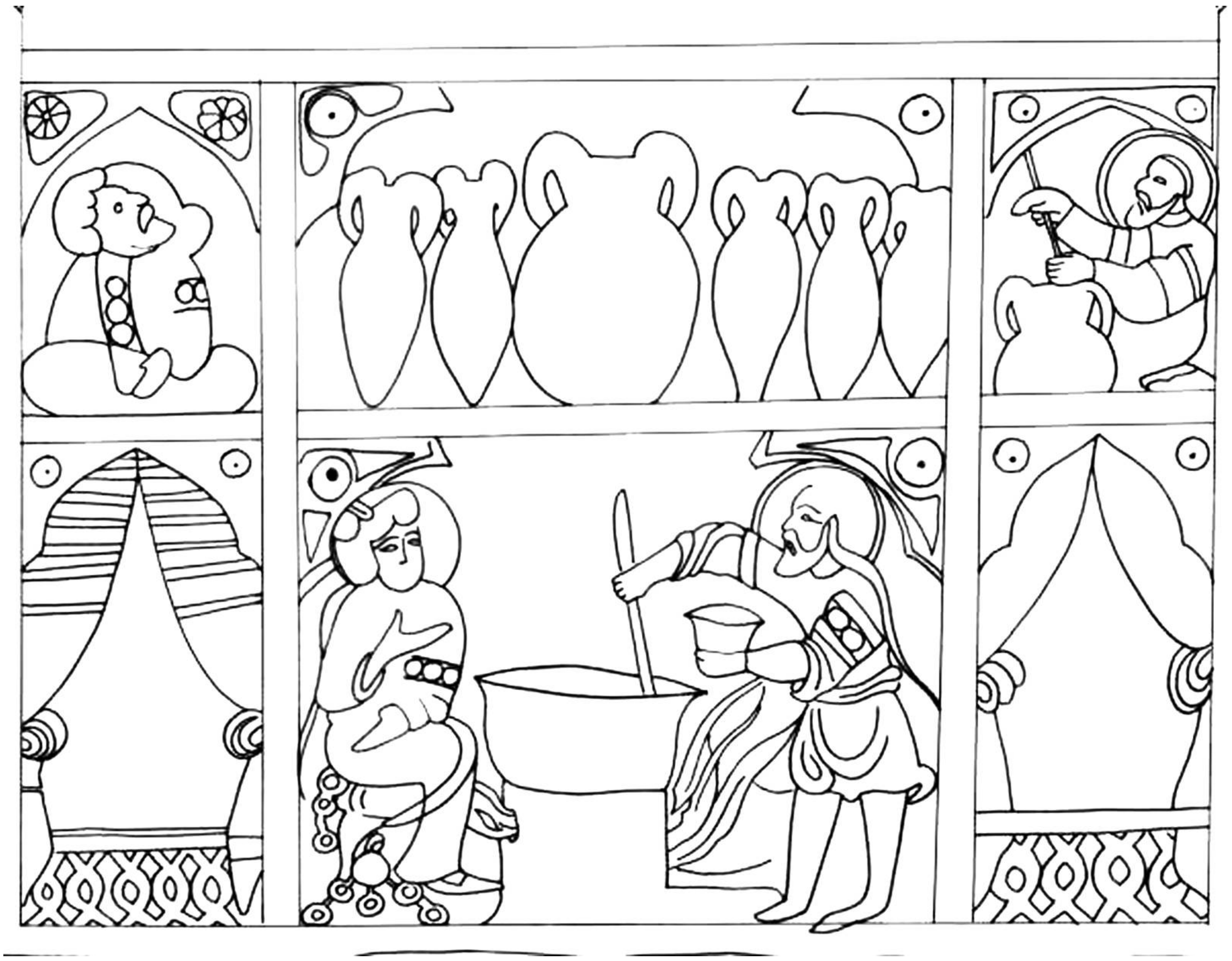

Figure 5. De Materia Medica *of Dioscorides; the pharmacy. Baghdad, 1224. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

Vatican Library, and the forty-second *maqama* of another Paris *Maqamat* manuscript, ms. Arabe 6094, dated 1222.[44] In many ways the setting of the scene from the former manuscript, showing Bayad singing and playing the '*ud* before the lady and her handmaidens (fig. 6), is a parallel to the scene from Arabe 6094 that shows Abu Zayd addressing an assembly in Najran (fig. 7). There are close similarities in the juxtaposition of figures on a horizontal line on the same stage, in the simple vertical lines intended to give the impression of a frame, and again in the expressive gestures of the figures. Looking at these two different pairs of miniatures, it could again be said that there appears to be a visible tie between the miniature paintings and oral performance traditions, if one recalls that *maqama* may have been written for theatrical performance in media such as shadow plays.[45]

Conclusions

The oral narrating traditions of the medieval Arab world are important for our understanding of the *Maqamat* illustrations, both for their socio-cultural content and for their technique of transmitting moral and didactic messages through an orally narrated text. As has been outlined above, oral narratives are likely to have informed the style and content of the literary genre of the *maqama*. If we accept that the early *maqama* may have been written for theatrical performances, such as shadow plays or puppet theatre, this is of tremendous relevance to the development of the miniatures. As an act of performance, oral narration could be the source of inspiration for both the literary *maqama* and some of the miniatures of the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri. Some of the settings of the miniatures, and the figural characterisation through gesture, highlight the relevance of the various traditions of oral narrative to this form of painted illustration. Therefore, those traditions could be regarded as one of the visual sources that informed the collective vision of the *Maqamat* painters.

The main point explored in this study is the suggestion that some of the miniatures of the *Maqamat* manuscripts transmit the sense that an act of oral narration is taking place. We can trace this transmission in certain scenes where there is a depiction of a theatrical performance

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[44] Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 79.

[45] Regarding the suggestion that the *Maqamat* may have been written for theatrical performance, see Folaron, 'Oral Narrating', p. 8, and Amine, 'Theatre in the Arab World', pp. 148–150.

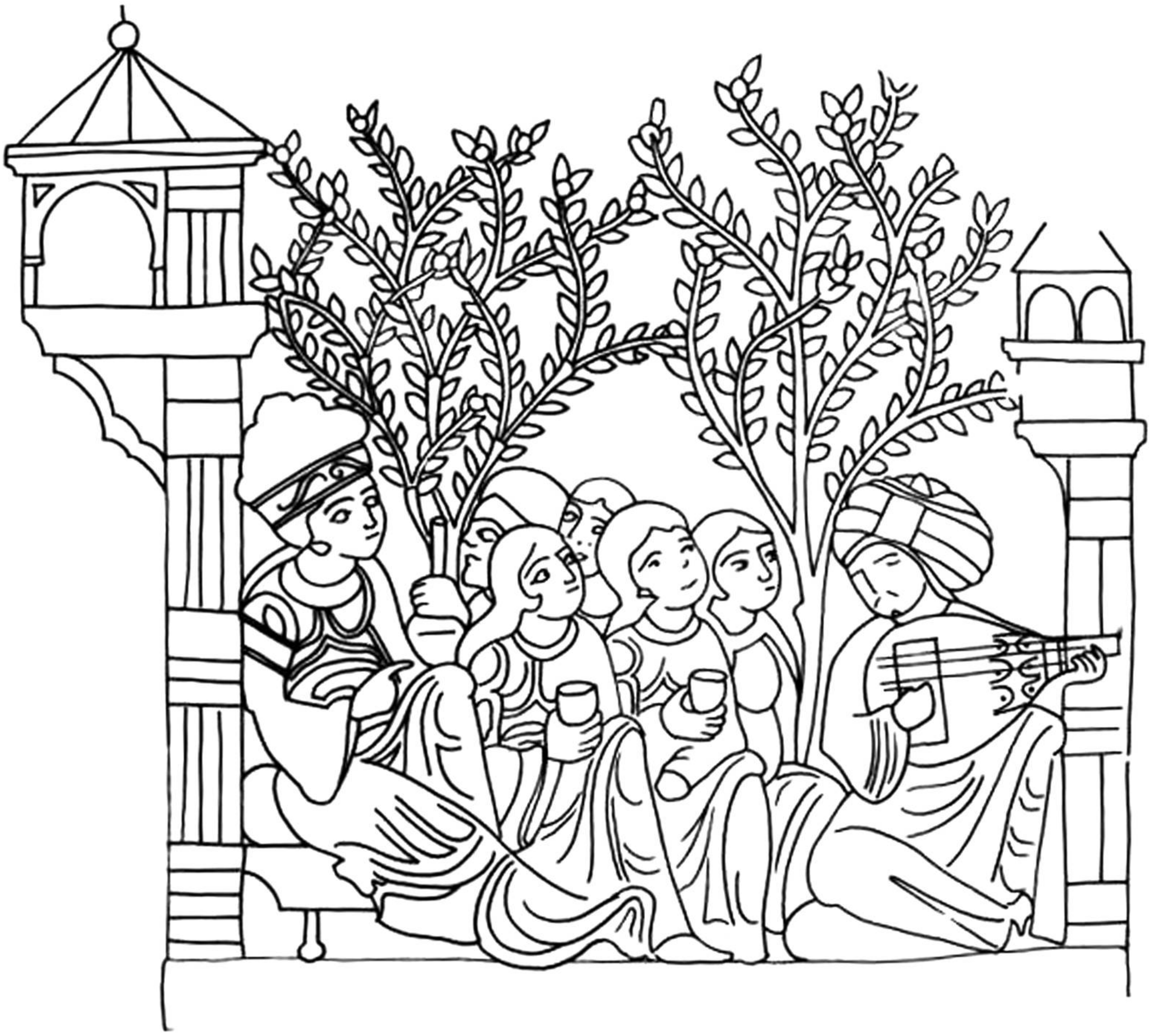

*Figure 6. The Story of Bayad and Riyad (*Hadith Bayad wa Riyad*): Bayad singing and playing the ‘ud before Riyad and her handmaidens. Spain or Morocco, thirteenth century. Ms. Ar. 368, Biblioteca Apostolica Vatican.*

included within the action of the scene; this is the moment at which the oral narrator creates a theatrical space and the audience is invited to interact. The painters of the *Maqamat* have transferred the image of an act of oral narration to the surface of the miniature paintings, creating at times a visual depiction of the performance itself within images that illustrate the narrative content of the text. Additionally, there are other scenes that allude in various ways to the act of oral narration, from which we may assume that the illustrator was influenced by his experience of those performances, and perhaps strove to create a close depiction of what he had seen in reality, as the narrator performed his story.

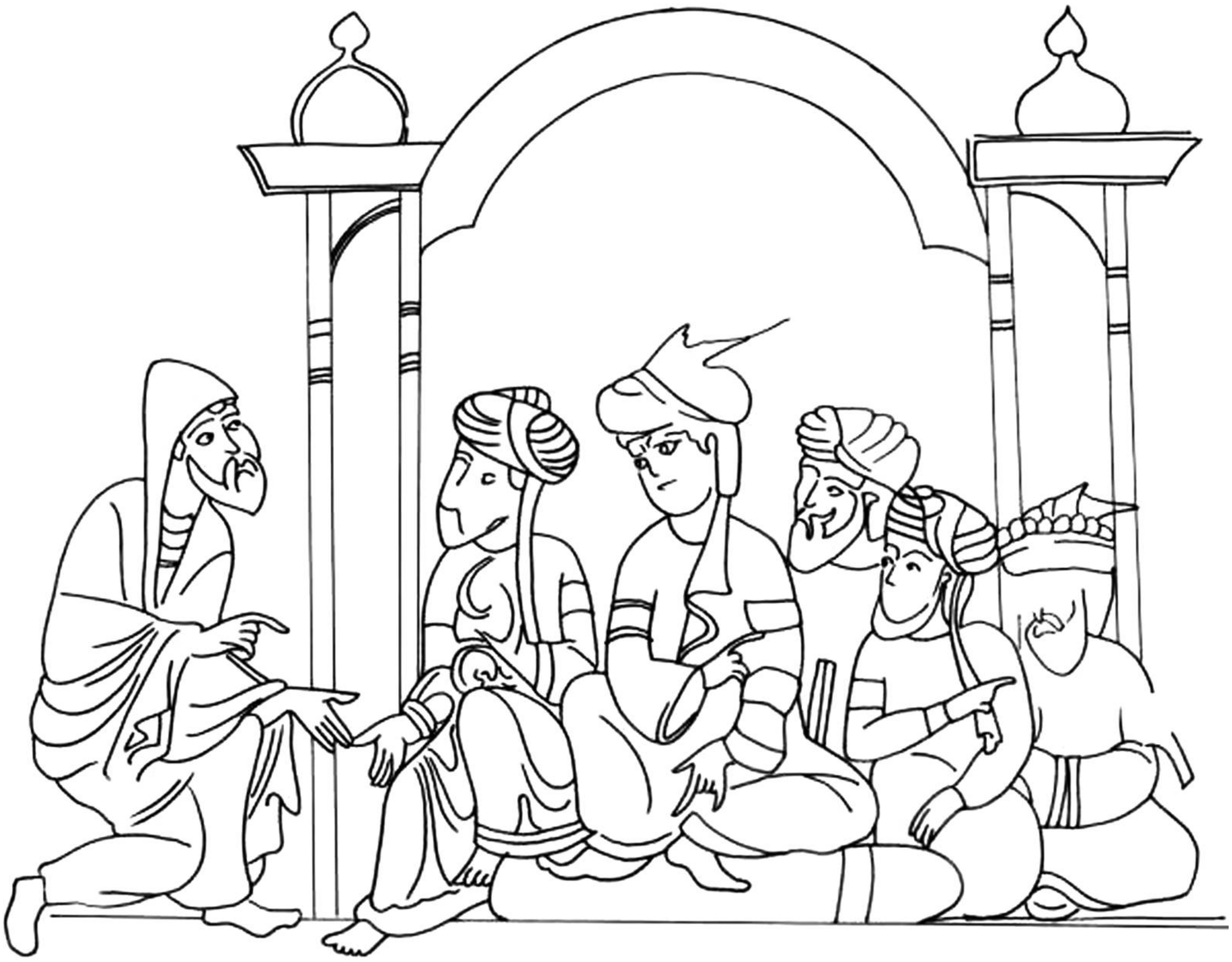

Figure 7. Maqamat *of al-Hariri: Abu Zayd addresses an assembly in Najran (forty-second maqama). Probably Syria, 1222. Ms. Arabe 6094, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.*

EXILE AND ADVENTURE: HASSAN MASSOUDY AND SINDBAD THE SAILOR

Sarah Sandow

Hassan Massoudy is a calligraphic artist who was born in Najaf, Iraq, in 1944.[1] In this 'holy city', surrounded by a large family who lived very traditionally, he studied calligraphy as a child, learning from an uncle. Around the city stretched the Mesopotamian desert, and this desert became, and has remained, a powerful influence on the artist, who has returned to the desert as often as he can: not now in Mesopotamia but in North Africa, where he often paints and teaches. He escaped from his native country in 1969, at the age of twenty-four, by dint of a false Iranian passport, after several episodes of imprisonment and other unpleasant encounters with the authorities. He has described this early life in his autobiography, *Si loin de l'Euphrate*. Arriving in Paris, he became a student at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, earning what he could as a calligrapher for Arabic journals. As a student he flirted with Western styles of figurative painting, influenced in turn by Léger and Matisse, but then returned to the calligraphic tradition in which he had been brought up. For the next forty years he has developed as an artist, engaging first with traditional calligraphy, becoming skilled in the 'six pens', the styles of classical calligraphy, and later adapting his skills to work with abstraction. Two additional experiences were formative: first, his discovery of Far Eastern calligraphy, and secondly performance art, which he discovered and practised from the mid 1970s. Both of these experiences drew him away from the isolation of the traditional Arabic calligrapher, and led him to an increasingly innovative way of working.

From the early 1980s to the present day he has built a reputation as an abstract calligraphic painter using traditional water-based paints in powerful colours on paper. Like the Far Eastern calligraphers he has studied, Massoudy paints rapidly, sometimes using the traditional reed-pen, the *qalam*, but also using broad instruments made of wood or board.[2] Many of his works are created as reflections of poems or aphorisms by philosophers from all over the world. Massoudy identifies the essence of a word or phrase and uses this as the central theme of a calligraph which expresses it, sometimes in very abstract form. He does not use the Qur'an as a source, although when working with a poet and a musician in the 1970s, Qur'anic verses were sometimes read. Some modern calligraphers, such as Ahmed Moustafa, use only Qur'anic sources,[3] but Massoudy prefers philosophical writings, whether from East or West. He acknowledges that this, like his free use of adapted calligraphic forms, has caused some disapproval in traditional circles.[4]

Many of his works are collected and published in thematic books, including *Calligraphie pour l'homme, Calligraphie du désert, Calligraphies d'amour,* and most recently *Désir d'envol: Une vie en calligraphie*.[5] In the Arabic tradition of the book, he has also designed volumes containing the poetry of Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, and others, and recently he has turned to traditional stories. Altogether, as well as exhibiting his individual paintings in Europe and beyond, he has produced more than twenty books. *L'histoire de Gilgamesh* and *Sindbad le Marin* appeared in 2004 and 2006 respectively.[6] Both of these tales are, of course, rooted in the soil of his native country, and both books, significantly, have been produced in the time since the wars that have all but destroyed it.

Gilgamesh contains many dark and frightening images, some of which are extremely impressive. For instance, the picture of death, indicating the sorrow of Gilgamesh for Enkidu, condemned by the gods, is a powerful evocation of mourning based on the word *mawt* (death); but the letters are incomplete, broken, like the broken columns in Victorian graveyards on tombs for those who died before their time.[7] However, while the individual images in this book are dramatic and evocative, as a whole *Gilgamesh* sometimes seems a problematic and even confused publication. *Sindbad*, on the other hand, is far more coherent and it reflects both the painter and his subject effectively. There are echoes of the life of the artist in the story of his protagonist. The style of the paintings demonstrates the ways in which the artist has developed, using the calligraphic forms in a manner that, while still an abstraction, has elements of representation.

Sindbad the Sailor, or Sindbad the Seaman, is one of the unforgettable characters whose stories are told in the *Thousand and One Nights*. These tales were first translated from the Arabic into French by Antoine Galland in the early eighteenth century.[8] Of course, many translations have followed, including those in French and Portuguese, and the wilder, racier English version written by Sir Richard Burton in the nineteenth century.[9] There are seven stories about Sindbad, who is described as living in Baghdad in the years of the 'Abbasid caliphate.[10] The Seaman is contrasted with 'Sindbad the porter', a more conventional character who stays at home, to whom the former relates his adventures. The first story begins with the dissolute young Sindbad, who, having wasted his inherited fortune, seeks a new one by embarking on a merchant ship from Basra, after which he experiences an amazing adventure, and then returns to Baghdad with great riches.[11] But on six further occasions, he finds it impossible to settle down and again goes in search of fortune. Each time, a shipwreck is the prelude to an astonishing adventure, and eventual success.

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[1] The biographical details given in this paper are drawn from Massoudy's autobiographical text, *Si loin de l'Euphrate* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004).

[2] Sarah Sandow, *Bridging Cultures: The Work of Hassan Massoudy, a Calligraphic Artist* (unpublished M.Sc. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2007), p. 64.

[3] Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 613–615.

[4] Sandow, *Bridging Cultures,* p. 101.

[5] Hassan Massoudy, *Calligraphies d'amour* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002); *idem*, *Calligraphie du désert* (Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2003); *idem*, *Calligraphie pour l'homme* (Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2003); *idem*, *Désir d'envol: Une vie en calligraphie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).

[6] Hassan Massoudy, *L'histoire de Gilgamesh* (Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2004); *idem*, *Sindbad le Marin* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).

[7] Massoudy, *Gilgamesh,* p. 51.

Of the seven stories, one deals with a Polyphemus-like ogre who kills and eats Sindbad's companions before being routed by the hero; one features a dangerous meeting with the Old Man of the Sea, and another an encounter with some equally unpleasant demons.[12] These rather alarming stories are not told, however, in Massoudy's *Sindbad le Marin*. He has chosen three other stories that concentrate on Sindbad's cleverness and bravery, but do not deal with frightening apparitions, extreme terrors or death. This certainly suggests that the three stories have been chosen with children in mind, but they have underlying aspects which reflect the painter's adult preoccupations. The text is in Arabic and French. The choice of Galland's translation is a kind of compliment to Massoudy's adopted nation, and the duality of the text relates to the artist's expressed wish to build a bridge between his two cultures.[13]

Sindbad and Massoudy both left their native country and travelled to faraway lands in search of fame and fortune. But Sindbad can, and does, return; an option not open to the artist. During years of exile, Massoudy has built upon his original knowledge and skill, and has learned from East and West throughout his artistic life. The rules and constraints of tradition have given him the perfectionism that is at the root of both his artistic life and classical Arabic calligraphy. In his early days this was expressed in exact, usually small, black-on-white drawings made with the *qalam*. Later, in the 1970s, Massoudy began a series of exhibitions of performance art, in which he used an overhead projector to calligraph and project on a screen images suggested by Arabic poetry spoken in French by an actor. Working in public, and working spontaneously, was at first a frightening but later a liberating experience. Finally, Massoudy was also much influenced by the calligraphy of Japanese and Korean artists, who combined apparent spontaneity with profound contemplation before action.[14]

The use of calligraphy as a form of abstraction which Massoudy has developed during the past twenty years, using a wide range of colour and different painting instruments, could lead us to consider what he does to be a form of lyrical abstraction, similar perhaps to that of a painter like Mathieu who bases his work on the letters of his own name. But this is far from the case.[15] Even though calligraphic strokes may appear to be similar to the *peintures gestuelles* of the twentieth-century abstract painters, they are different in intent and effect. Often gestural paintings appear to be the result of unbridled emotion, and they succeed according to the degree to which we recognise and respond to that emotion. Massoudy distrusts such outpourings, and his calligraphic art, by contrast, seeks balance and control, even when it is expressing the most powerful feelings. It is 'emotion recollected in tranquility'.[16] Joy and sorrow, he believes, are balanced within it, just as are light and dark, action and stillness. 'Faced with a tragic impulse, calligraphy imposes a kind of containment and control which allow one to overcome troubles. One becomes master of oneself for a while.'[17] Meeting the artist, whose own life has been marked by tragedy, and who is profoundly affected by events in the country to which he is unlikely ever to return, one is struck, nevertheless, by his serenity.

In 2006 Massoudy published his book about Sindbad the Seaman. Before doing so he visited Japan and was struck in particular by the famous *Ryoan-ji* Zen garden in Kyoto. Here, groups of two or three stones are placed in a landscape of raked sand. Plant life is minimal, comprising only mosses and lichens that have grown on the stones. The whole is intended to lead to inner peace through contemplation. The raked sand could be thought of as the sea, or of course the desert. The garden inspired the way Massoudy used calligraphy in the book, particularly the various islands which feature in Sindbad's adventures.[18] The islands are shown surrounded by water, but isolated. The water is indicated by the use of many tiny repeated words: *al-bahr* ('the sea') or sometimes *al-nahr* ('the river'). The calligraphic base for the islands is plain but difficult to interpret. More accessible are the many images of the boats on which Sindbad embarks, images which are entirely calligraphic but nevertheless almost representational.

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[8] Antoine Galland (trans.), *Les Milles et un nuits: contes arabes traduit en français,* new edition (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1965).

[9] Richard F. Burton, *Tales from the Arabian Nights*, ed. David Shumaker (New York: Avenel Books, 1978). Originally published 1885–8.

[10] The Caliph Harun al-Rashid is mentioned in the text of *Sindbad le Marin* (p. 93). Harun al-Rashid ruled Baghdad from 766 to 809 CE.

[11] Massoudy, *Sindbad le Marin*, p. 25; Burton, *Arabian Nights*, p. 397.

[12] Burton, *Arabian Nights*, pp. 385–461.

[13] Massoudy, personal communication to the author, 2006. See also Jean Pierre Sicre, *Le chemin d'un calligraphe* (Paris: Phebus, 1991), p. 14.

[14] Massoudy, *Si loin de l'Euphrate,* p. 162.

[15] Georges Mathieu (1921–), French abstract painter. Cited in Sarah Wilson, 'Paris Post-war: In search of the absolute', in Frances Morris (ed.), *Paris Post-War: Art and Existentialism* (London: Tate Gallery, 1993), p. 45.

[16] Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth R. Hapgood (London: Bles, 1937). Although Stanislavsky borrowed the idea to describe the process by which an actor develops a character, this concept was first expressed by Wordsworth in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802).

[17] Massoudy, *Calligraphies d'amour*, p. 183. Please note that translations from the French are by the author.

[18] Massoudy, *Sindbad le Marin*, cover-note.

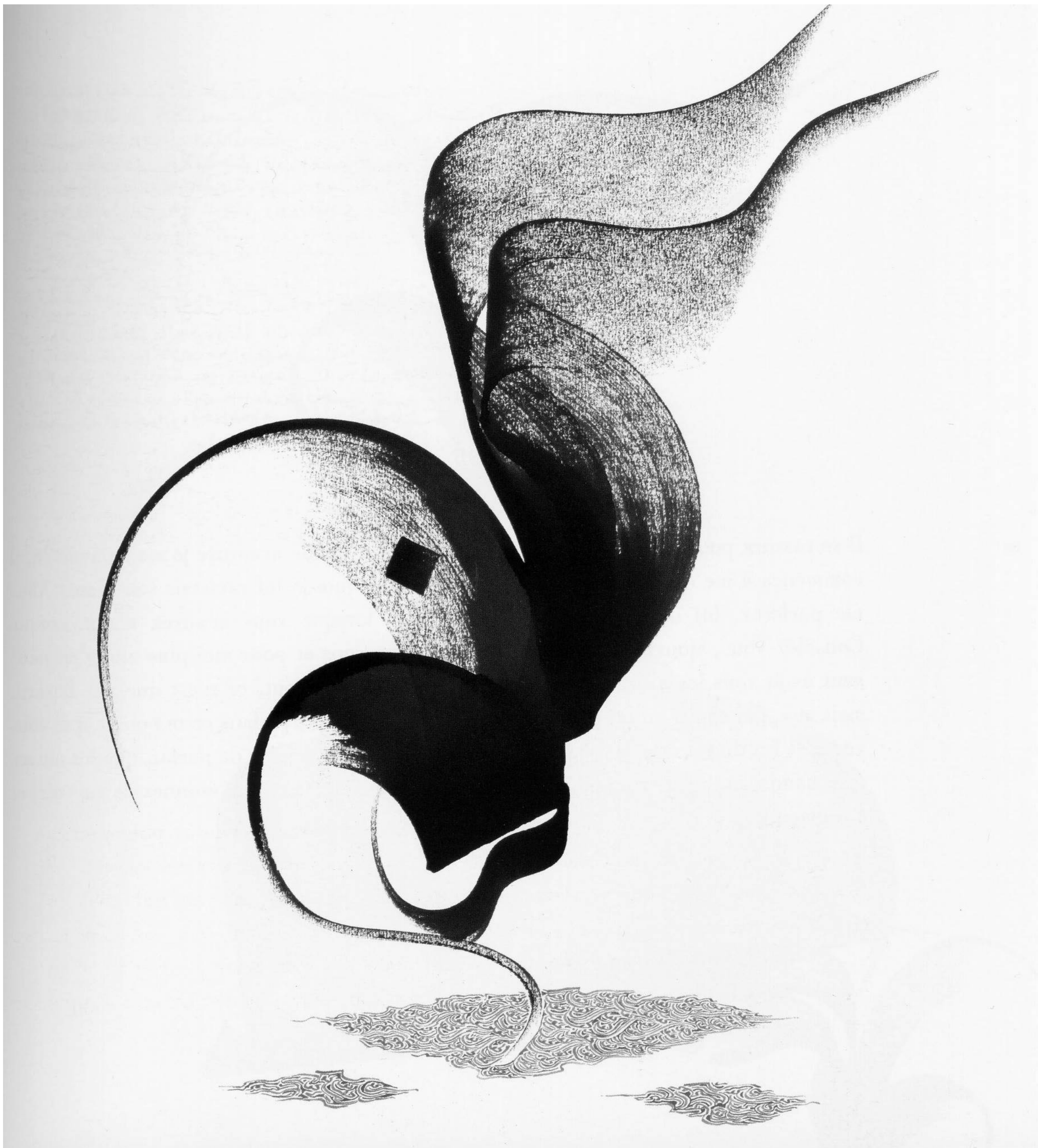

Figure 1. The rukh *with the serpent. From Hassan Massoudy,* Sindbad le Marin *(Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2006), p. 46. Reproduced here by kind permission of the artist.*

In the second tale, Sindbad falls asleep on a fertile island, and after seeing his ship disappear without him, he finds an enormous spherical object which is revealed to be the egg of the giant roc (in Arabic *rukh*). This enormous bird settles down over its fantastic egg, and Sindbad escapes by tying the tail of his turban to the leg of the bird. The word *al-rukh* is used to delineate the vast and elegant wingspan of the bird, the *al* making one wing of the bird, the *ra* its beak and the *kha* its other wing. It is shown sitting on the egg, carrying off the resourceful Sindbad, and seizing a serpent in the valley of diamonds (fig. 1).[19]

We have seen that Sindbad returns after each adventure to his native city, loaded with honours and riches, some of which he distributes to the poor and some of which he gives to the caliph, Harun al-Rashid.[20] The words 'city of Baghdad' are emphasised in the Arabic script, and the picture of Baghdad is that of a dramatic and elegant city, set against a towering forest (fig. 2). Tall *alif*s and *dal*s dominate the scene and the minarets are topped with *ghayn*s. Forms that appear to be ships are reflected in the surrounding river, which is made of many tiny repetitions of the name of the city.

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[19] Massoudy, *Sindbad le Marin*, pp. 40, 43, 45.

[20] *Ibid*., p. 94.

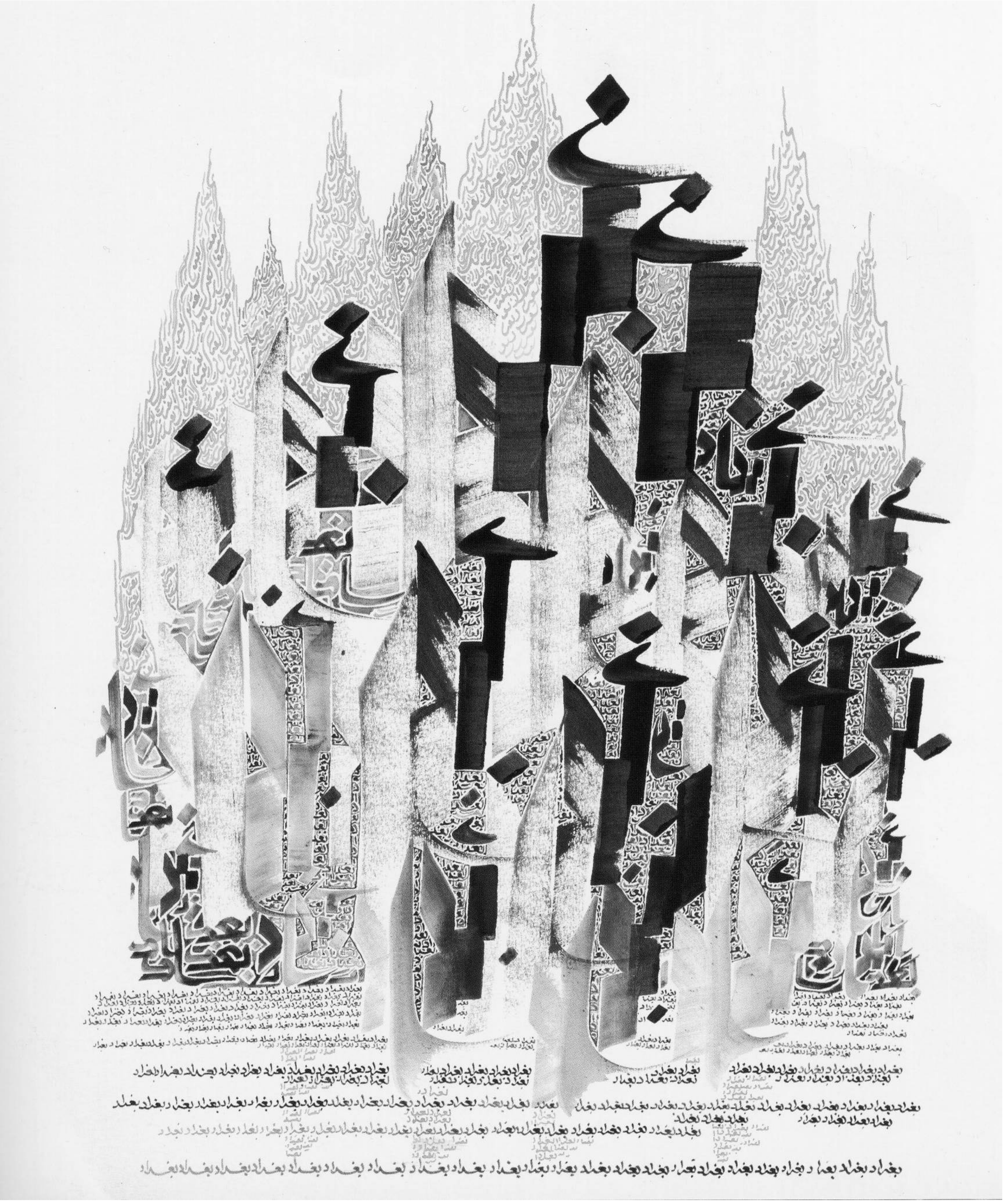

Figure 2. The City of Baghdad. From Hassan Massoudy, Sindbad le Marin *(Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2006), p. 27. Reproduced here by kind permission of the artist.*

Over the years the adventurer Sindbad amasses his fortune and becomes prosperous. And today, in Paris, we can see how the exiled artist has changed. From quasi-representational images in the early years, he moved to more abstract designs a few years later, such as the illustration of a poem by ʻAntara, showing the heroic quest of the poet in pursuit of his lady. The mirrored figure is shown twice, once in the background and once advancing powerfully over the desert.[21] The desert is a significant presence in much of Massoudy's work. In 1980 he made a fairly traditional representation of a phrase from Gibran

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[21] Sicre, *Le chemin d'un calligraphe*, p. 29.

'The earth is my country and humanity is my family',[22] but a few years later he was to use the same phrase much more simply.[23] In the later work he used only the word *al-ard* (the earth) and echoed the loop of the *dad* with the *nun* at the end of *Gibran* in the ascription below. And he followed the anguished scream of Gilgamesh, in 1994, with the ingenuity of Sindbad (reflected in the design of his ships) two years later, and the bustling city of Baghdad.

But is this a real city? In *Calligraphie du désert,* there is a lengthy extract from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry:

> The heat rises, and with it come the simplest mirages. Great lakes seem to be formed ahead of us, and disappear as we advance. We decide to cross the sandy valley, and to climb the highest ridge ahead of us, in order to scan the horizon. This valley of sand at our feet opens into a sandy stoneless desert, and the dramatic white light burns our eyes. As far as the eye can see, there is only emptiness. But on the horizon, the play of the light produces even more troubling mirages. Fortresses and minarets, geometric masses with tall towers.[24]

This is the city. But the tall towers and minarets disappear as the traveller advances. Sindbad's Baghdad is a mirage. It no longer exists. The exile cannot return to it, though the adventurer did.

We are accustomed to viewing the work of Western artists, whether representational or abstract, as an expression of the artist's perception of his own experience and his own life. However, Arabic calligraphic art is more often seen as a highly skilled craft that is independent of the emotional life of the calligrapher, to be judged by its beauty of line and its accurate adherence to stylistic convention. The calligrapher himself is veiled in obscurity. But Massoudy's work shows us that this perception is misleading. The calligrapher selects and creates his works in relation to, not separately from, his own life, and develops them in an individually meaningful way. In choosing his metier, he has created a visual language which is more than the sum of its parts, and which engages the participant observer.

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[22] *Ibid*., p. 38.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 163.

[24] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Terre des homes*: *oeuvres complètes vol. 1* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 248. Quoted in Massoudy, *Calligraphie du désert*, p. 82.